

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES OF MICRONESIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS IN HAWAI'I:
UTILIZING POSITIVE DEVIANTS TO DEVELOP STRENGTH-BASED STUDENT
SUPPORT SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

At'tirow

Tirow womi rewe Urupuwulo Kuor,

father figure, promised brother, and role model
of dignity, wisdom, generosity, love, and humility for me and my siblings.

Ngenir fin me re Pwaraka me Alengeitaw,

my ancestors whose DNA of strong women, brave warriors, humble chiefs,
wise navigators, loving parents, and compassionate leaders
I proudly carry in my blood. All shortcomings are entirely mine.

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have kept me going on this difficult doctoral journey
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ABSTRACT

Since the 1986 ratification of the Compact of Free Association between the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the United States (US) government, large numbers of Micronesians have migrated to the US in search of better education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for their children. Similarly to other new immigrants to the US, Micronesians face discrimination and other negative stereotypes. While there is a growing number of Micronesians enrolling in higher education in Hawai‘i and other US institutions, very little research has been conducted within this population. Like many institutions of higher education, student support services for Micronesians are framed entirely by deficit-oriented models often reflecting data such as low retention and graduation rates. Robust and culturally appropriate data collection methods that are more informative and responsive are sorely wanting.

This qualitative study applies the Positive Deviance theoretical framework to understand the strategies and behaviors enabling success for twelve Micronesian college students at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. What emerged from the study were uncommon strategies and attitudinal adjustments about individual academic success, cultural adaptations to communal obligations in a largely individualized learning environment, maximization of limited resources, and self-regulating behaviors to build self-efficacy.

The results of this study have significant implications for practice in institutions of higher learning particularly when supporting Micronesian students. It provides information and strategies for faculty and staff to utilize in developing strength-based approaches to support student success particularly for migrant students from the Pacific. The findings also provide

valuable information for Micronesian students who strive to develop similar self-regulatory strategies and attitudinal adjustments to enable their success.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background

This study applies the framework of Positive Deviance (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010) and contributes to the limited knowledge base about Micronesian college students in American university settings. Literature highlighting the growing population of Pacific Islanders (PI) migrating to the United States (US) in search of better education, healthcare, and economic opportunities is scarce. Through a qualitative research methodology this study is positive, exploratory, and practical. First, it is *positive* as it defines and describes “successful” indigenous Micronesian students in an American college setting. Second, it is *exploratory* in its intention to honor indigenous research methodology by examining strategies used by indigenous students to facilitate their success in Hawai‘i. Third, this study incorporates action research for improving one’s practices (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010) and hopefully those of other practitioners.

Micronesians in America

Micronesians have been migrating to the US since the United Nations awarded strategic control of the region to the US government after World War II. In 1986, when the first Compact of Free Association (COFA) was ratified by the United States Congress, Micronesians began migrating to the US in earnest. In a 2012 survey of FSM migrants in the US, Hezel & Levin (2012) estimated over 49,000 FSM citizens resided in the United States. The authors cited better employment, education, and health care as the main reasons for the influx of Micronesians to the US (Hezel & Levin, 2012). Hezel (2013) later estimated a net gain of 700 - 1,200 citizens annually to the US. Educational attainment abroad was viewed by many Micronesians as an “investment” in the new cash based economy (Grieco, 2003, p. 79). The highest degree

attainable in the FSM is an Associate's degree through the College of Micronesia community college. To receive a Bachelor's degree, Micronesians must migrate to the United States or Guam.

The US policies on social, political and economic matters in the region resulted in greater mobility of Micronesians (Grieco, 2003). Infusion of federal money into a historically subsistence-centered economy, the institutionalization of "universal education," and the COFA resulted in increased numbers of Micronesians seeking opportunities to improve their wage-earning capacity through education. The COFA enabled citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of Palau (ROP), and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) unlimited immigration to the US.

The large influx of Micronesian immigrants to the closest US border state of Hawai'i and the territory of Guam have led to documented racism against them as the "newcomers" (Talmy, 2010). Much like the experiences of other new arrivals in the US, Micronesians have been blamed for educational, healthcare, and other social challenges in Hawai'i (Kaneshiro, 2008b; Schulte, 2012; Talmy, 2010; Yamada, 2012). The dearth of information about the richly diverse Micronesian cultures, languages, traditions make it doubly difficult for Micronesians to overcome negative stereotypes.

My Interest

My interest in researching Micronesian students was influenced by my own experience as an indigenous Micronesian educator residing in Hawai'i. In qualitative research, behind the interest, beliefs, research questions, theoretical framework, analysis "stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural, and

ethnic community perspective” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 18). My own story as a Chuukese Micronesian reflected many of the students I served. I attended public schools in Chuuk and left my family for a college education in Guam. Although schools in Chuuk aspired to give children a proper education, my public education failed to adequately prepare me for college.

I thought I was ready for college in America. I was confident having graduated from the Gifted and Talented program at Chuuk High School. I soon discovered that I was underprepared academically, culturally, and personally. The turning point for me began when I enrolled in a college success course taught through the Counseling Center at the University of Guam. The course used successful college students as Peer Counselors to help new students with the necessary strategies, skills, and behaviors that lead to success. Through hard work, trial and error, questions and through observations I began to form self-confidence and developed belief in my ability to succeed in college. There began the foundation of what I learned later to be called “self-efficacy,” which is the belief in one’s ability to complete tasks or change by one’s actions (Bandura, 1977; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1979; Zimmerman, 2000).

The Peer Counseling program was such a tremendous support for my success that I was recruited to serve as a Peer Counselor to support other Micronesian students. Teaching other students helped me continue to implement the skillset I was teaching others. I utilized the Pell Grant, the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program to earn an income and gain valuable on-the-job training. I had never held a paid job prior to my work-study experiences.

Taking on leadership roles propelled my success in college. Over time I began to believe in my ability to serve as a student leader. I was elected the Vice President of the largest club on campus at the time, the Micronesian Student Club for FSM students, co-founded the Remetaw

Club for students from the outer islands of Chuuk and Yap, volunteered at the Campus Ministry Center, became the Associate Editor for Triton's Call, the school newspaper.

I met incredibly passionate, caring, and conscientious mentors who inspired me to continue moving forward. I improved my skills on how to study efficiently, take lecture notes using tape recorders, and write term papers. All those experiences, skills, and support services enabled me to graduate in a record four years which at that time was rare among the Micronesian students. My journey started on a trajectory I had never imagined growing up on that small low-lying coral island of Houk in the Northwest region in Chuuk State.

Fast forward to 2012, I was hired as the director of the Pacific Islander Student Center (PISC) at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) to facilitate the success of over 200 self-identified Pacific Islander (PI) students in higher education. Funded by the US Department of Education, the Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) project aimed to improve retention and graduation rates for PI students, half of whom were Micronesians. My responsibility forced me to reflect on my own difficult journey and what I needed to survive. It also made me question institutional expectations and cultures of student support services. What was the disconnect between institutional strategies and student abilities to succeed on their own? At what point does an institution cease to be helpful and hence becoming a hindrance to one's self-generating growth?

Context of the Study

Institutions of higher learning have tended to utilize a deficit-model to create student support services. Policy choices for resource allocation tend to be directed towards students who are failing with efforts to retain and graduate them. Federal funding programs such as Title III are

directed to qualified institutions to “expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality,” (Retrieved June 5, 2017 from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/iduestitle3a/index.html>). Such funding sources often lead institutions to focus on student deficit over the cultural asset for which they were recruited. On one hand, institutions such as UH Hilo proudly celebrate their ranking as the “Most Diverse 4-year Public Institution in the Country” by the Chronicle of Higher Education (Retrieved 6/5/2017 from <http://hilo.hawaii.edu/blog/chancellor/2014/08/22/most-diverse-in-country/>). Yet, one wonders if the strengths and assets of that diversity are celebrated, encouraged, nurtured, resourced when those students arrive on campus. Or do such characteristics become secondary to their academic deficit?

The deficit model is particularly disadvantageous to students from historically unrepresented families who are more likely to experience academic challenges (Green, 2006; Keith, Byerly, Floerchinger, Pence, & Thornberg, 2006). Green (2006) explained, “Historically underserved students continue to face difficulties as they attempt to progress through the educational pipeline, and leaks at critical points of transition are leaving them vulnerable” (p. 23).

As the newest migrant community in Hawai‘i, Micronesians face racial discrimination (Yamada, 2011). The deficit model perpetuates the notion that Micronesians are unsuccessful in college. The problem is exacerbated by the limited knowledge of “culturally-sustaining” (Paris, 2012) strategies to support their unique needs. It is crucial for institutions to provide culturally responsive and sustaining strategies to support student success for Micronesian students. While academic success retains its importance in institutions of higher learning, it seems equally crucial

for institutions that support indigenous populations to learn about the strengths and assets of those populations to support their success.

Purpose of the Study

Using the Positive Deviance (PD) approach, this study seeks to identify Micronesian college students who are successfully navigating the challenges of a baccalaureate education and highlight their practices and strategies. Knowledge gained from the research will contribute to the limited data on this relatively new migrant community in the United States who are often misunderstood, negatively stereotyped, and racially discriminated against. By using the PD approach, the study provides a strength-based narrative of Micronesian students, their values, behaviors, and strategies that may offer solutions for future students.

The deliberate use of the PD framework enables me to focus the research on how Micronesians are achieving success rather than why they are failing (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010a). It brings the strategies and practices of these highly successful students to the forefront of research rather than as an after-effect. Successful Micronesian students become the teachers informing institutions of higher learning how best to develop student support services to further Micronesian students in higher education. As Micronesians continue to migrate to the United States for more education, post-secondary institutions have a responsibility to support their success.

Research Questions

This study sets out to answer the following research questions:

1) What strategies and practices do highly successful indigenous adult Micronesian students employ to succeed in higher education in Hawai'i?

2) What can institutions of higher education in Hawai‘i learn from a strength-based, positive deviance approach that informs student support services programs to facilitate the success of indigenous college students?

Significance of the Study

The positive deviance approach recognizes that in every at-risk community there exist individuals who defy the odds through uncommon practices that enable their success (Pascale et al., 2010a). This study attempts to gain insight into the practices, values, and behaviors of successful Micronesian college students at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. The migration of Micronesian citizens to the US will continue as long as the COFA exists in perpetuity. Likewise, without a 4-year institution in the FSM, Micronesian students will continue to pursue higher education in the United States. Given Hawai‘i’s proximity to the FSM, the Micronesian diaspora will continue to grow in Hawai‘i and on the continent. The experiences of Micronesian students are unique within the PI population and certainly different from the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) model minority concept. It is important for educators and institutions of higher education to understand the context of Micronesian students because of their unique historical, educational, cultural, and linguistic background which are different from other PI students.

Data on the experiences of Micronesian students in Hawai‘i are limited. What is available often emphasizes the negative impact of this migrant population. Institutions of higher education typically describe low persistence and graduation rates of PIs in grant applications written to improve these rates through intervention. Inevitably, institutions rely on data from other minority groups to devise strategies to combat these problems. Student Support Services often reflect growing trends of supporting “underrepresented students” reinforcing the deficit model. The

strategies employed by student support services personnel often fail to address the root causes of problems facing Micronesian students because institutions have minimal “best practices” specific to the context of Micronesian students.

Theoretical Framework

This study attempts to challenge the deficit-orientation in student support services by using a positive deviance approach, a fairly new method within the field of action research. Developed originally to address malnutrition issues in international development, positive deviance has been adapted to solve other educational, entrepreneurial, and management issues. The use of the PD method in educational settings from high school to higher education has shown improvement among at-risk communities (Spreitzer, 2003). Using an asset-based framework through a positive deviance approach presents a viable option for educators in Hawai‘i and the US to recognize that Micronesian students can in fact contribute to knowledge and strategies to support their success in school.

The strength-based approach of the positive deviance method provides another avenue facilitating indigenous research methodology. By acknowledging positive deviants and their successful practices as research contributors, we validate their abilities and offer an alternate approach to student support services. The approach also legitimizes the unique experiences of Micronesian college students within the context of underrepresented minority groups in the US.

Social Justice Implications

This study has social justice implications for the Micronesian community in Hawai‘i particularly those residing on Hawai‘i Island. The influx of Micronesians to Hawai‘i has seen a related spike in racial discrimination against them. Historically, other ethnic minority immigrant

communities such as Filipinos, Japanese, Portuguese, Samoans have experienced the same discriminatory patterns during their early migration to Hawai‘i. The report, *Broken Promises, Shattered Lives: The case for justice for Micronesians in Hawai‘i* (Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, 2011) concluded, “it is time to reject stereotypes that demonize the COFA community and adopt policies that support their full integration into our state.” (p. 4). A study of positive deviants will likely challenge these negative stereotypes by normalizing the assets of the Micronesian community to overcome a deficit narrative that has contributed to other types of social discrimination (Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, 2011)

Finally, the findings in this study may be relevant to administrators in higher education as they envision alternative approaches to student support services for Pacific Islanders. While the data builds upon the limited studies about Micronesians in the US, the deliberate use of the positive deviance framework adds an asset-based approach to supporting this target population.

Definition of Terms

This study uses several terms that warrant proper explanation to increase understandings about Micronesians. These terms are presented below alphabetically.

AANAPISI - Stands for Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions which is a funding source within the US Department of Education dedicated to supporting student success for culturally underrepresented student populations.

Compact of Free Association (COFA) - The treaty between the FSM and the United States. Ratified in 1986 by US Public Law 99-239, the COFA agreement, among a few provisions, enables Micronesians to migrate to the United States without a visa. In exchange, the US has certain access to FSM’s territorial waters for strategic military purposes. The Republic of

Palau (1996) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (1986) also have COFA agreements with the United States.

Chuuk - Formerly known as Truk, means *mountain* in the Chuukese language. It is the most populous of the four states in the FSM with about 48,654 (2010) Chuukese people dispersed among 40 municipalities on mountainous islands in the Chuuk lagoon and sandy low lying coral islands. Chuuk is home to Xavier High School, considered the best college preparatory private school in the country.

Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) - A sovereign nation located in the Western Pacific consisting of four states: Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Yap.

Freely Associated States (FAS) - Refers to the three sovereign nations of the FSM, Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands which are politically affiliated with the United States through the COFA treaties.

Joint Economic Management Committee (JEMCO) - A high level 5-member committee comprising of United States and FSM government representatives which oversees the economic provisions of the COFA funding allocations.

Kosrae - Formerly Kusaie, meaning sky (kuhsra) is the smallest of the FSM states with a population of 6,660 (2010) residing on the island of Kosrae.

Micronesia - One of three major regions in the Pacific along with Polynesia and Melanesia. Geographically Micronesia includes the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Mariana Islands (CNMI), Nauru, and Kiribati.

Micronesians - The term is often used widely in Hawai‘i and the US to generalize about a diverse group of people from the geographical region of Micronesia. For this study, the term refers specifically to citizens of the FSM or US-born children of FSM citizens. Rarely in this manuscript will the term blanket the entire geographical region of Micronesia. This is meant to distinguish them from Palauans, Marshallese, Nauruans, Saipanese, I Kiribati, Carolinians, Chamorros who are often called Micronesians as belonging to the geographical region of Micronesia.

Pacific Islanders (PI) - Generally refers to people from the three geographical regions in the Pacific known as Micronesia, Polynesia, and Melanesia. For the purpose of the study, PI is limited to students from the US-affiliated nations and territories of American Samoa (AS), the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), FSM, Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and Republic of Palau (ROP).

Persistence - Continuation of a student’s enrollment in school from semester to semester.

Pohnpei - Formerly Ponape, meaning *upon a stone altar* in the Pohnpeian language, is the largest land mass among the four states in the FSM with an estimated population of 34,000 (2010). Hosting the capital of the FSM and the College of Micronesia’s flagship campus, the state is largely concentrated on the mountainous island of Pohnpei and a handful of outer islands.

Positive Deviance (PD) - The PD website (<http://www.positivedeviance.org/>) sets out the foundational tenet that “in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges.”

Student Retention - Often used interchangeably with persistence, student retention is the measure of student success based on a few factors especially graduation rates.

Underrepresented Students (UR) - In federal funding, UR often encompasses minority students in underserved ethnic communities in the US who are often first generation college students, economically disadvantaged students under the national poverty line. Pacific Islanders have become part of these minority communities.

Yap - Known locally as Wa‘ab, the State of Yap is in the Western-most part of the FSM. Yap’s population of 11,377 (2010) reside on the mountainous island of Yap as well as small isolated low lying coral atolls commonly referred to as “outer islands.”

Delimitations

For practical reasons, researchers must make clear choices on the parameters of the research. This study focused particularly on enrolled students or newly graduated students at UH Hilo who self-identified as citizens of the FSM or whose parents are FSM citizens. At minimum, the recruited students have persisted for a minimum of one academic year at UH Hilo. It also includes students who recently graduated within the year and are currently pursuing graduate studies in other universities in Hawai‘i. Freshmen were not invited to participate in this study based on the assumption of inexperience.

Limitations

This study is limited in its generalizability to the larger Micronesian community. The small sample size and purposeful selection of participants from the four FSM states at one institution in Hawai‘i prevents generalizability to the larger context of Micronesian youth and other Pacific countries including Palau, the Marshall Islands, Guam, CNMI, and Nauru. While

purposeful sampling of the participants provided a diverse profile, one cannot conclude that these characteristics reflect the type of Micronesian students who would be successful in every situation.

The Micronesian community in Hawai‘i is marginalized and assumed to be a homogenous community of Pacific migrants. The FSM itself is a widely diverse country consisting of numerous languages and dialects, cultures, traditions, and history. While schools are administered by the national FSM Department of Education, the quality of college preparatory schools vary greatly among schools throughout the nation. This study does not attempt to explain how the varying degrees of cultural, educational, and linguistic differences support student success. The experiences shared by the participants at UH Hilo should be honored as their experiences individually and should not represent the general population of FSM college students from the same island, state, or school.

Micronesians consider respect as the core of their cultural concepts and values (Hezel, 2013). Elders, chiefs, parents, and other people perceived to be in leadership roles are especially afforded honors even if undeserved. As the former director of the Pacific Islander Student Center (PISC), I was in a leadership role and perceived as an elder in the campus community of Pacific Islanders. All participants in the study had been active participants in the PISC. Although I resigned from my role as director prior to data collection, it was possible that participants may have felt less inclined to fully share their true thoughts lest they appear boastful or less humbled in the presence of an elder.

I deliberately utilized the *talanoa* research methodology to exemplify the positive components of this community (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Vaiioleti, 2006). Moreover, as

explained in Chapter 3, every effort was made to alleviate the power dynamic by focusing on common trust, values, and responsibility to the community to engage participants as authentic experts who are positive deviants. It still suffices to assume that as respectful Micronesians, participants' responses to my questions may be reflective of their perceptions of how I would want them to respond, rather than their own true experiences.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into a traditional 5-chapter dissertation. The first chapter begins with an overview of the social, historical, and educational background of Micronesian students in the United States. Additionally, the chapter articulates the problem of practice, context, purpose and significance of the study related to current support services in higher education. It also includes the primary and secondary research questions, delimitations, limitations, and the technical terms used throughout the paper.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the conceptual framework as an action research and synthesizes literature on Pacific research methodology particularly the indigenous Micronesian Chuukese *arekirek* inquiry method, deficit approach used throughout higher education, the cultural and educational reality of Micronesians, and barriers that Micronesian college students face as first generation college students. It concludes with extant literature on the Positive Deviance approach, its applicability and impact on education.

Chapter 3 details the methodological approach including the research design and questions, the setting, participants, and the method of collecting and analyzing the data. It begins with my positionality as a researcher to affirm the positive contributions of indigenous

Micronesians. This dissertation is as much an academic endeavor as it is an affirmation of the voices of indigenous researchers today and in the future.

Chapter 4 describes the findings of the research grouped into themes that emerged through the interviews with participants.

Finally, chapter 5 has the recommendations and implications of these findings for institutions of higher learning in the United States particularly Hawai‘i. This chapter also contains my conclusions.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore the practices and strategies utilized by highly successful Micronesian college students at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. Using the Positive Deviance (PD) approach to problem-solving, the focus was on identifying young adults in the Micronesian community who have similar challenges and resources yet manage to overcome those challenges by applying “uncommon practices” (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010b). PD is an asset-based approach to studying how to use those strategies or uncommon practices employed by successful community members to solve intractable problems. While this study incorporates elements of the PD method in a college setting, it has been widely used in other areas of major challenges including the health industry, business, school settings, and most especially in international community settings. While inspired by the PD initiative of www.positivedeviance.org, my work was informed by it as a general approach to research, not as a strict method of research.

This chapter explores the limited but key literature on the general subject of positive deviance as a potential framework for addressing low graduation and retention rates of Micronesian college students in the United States. It begins with an overview of the literature search process, followed by a summary of the study’s conceptual framework, and the components of indigenous Pacific research protocols employed in my methodology. Secondly, I present an overview of the Micronesian migration history to the US to set the historical, political, social, and educational context of the study participants. Next, I review the limited studies on the experiences of Micronesian students in the US and the challenges they face in achieving their

educational goals. Thirdly, the PD approach, history, procedures, and applicability are examined as an asset-based problem-solving method for potential implementation in higher education settings. Ultimately, this chapter aims to critically synthesize existing literature on the subject with the goal of closing the gap in knowledge to which this study contributes.

Overview of Literature Search

My decision to focus on the positive deviance approach to understand Micronesian college students' experiences at UH Hilo grew out of my professional and lived encounters. Professionally, I was frustrated by the deficit approach to supporting underrepresented populations particularly, the Micronesian population in Hawai'i. I wanted to examine the existing literature specifically about practices of highly successful (positive deviants) Micronesian college students in American higher education institutions. My initial review of the literature via the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and other online educational databases accessed through the UH Mānoa library website failed to uncover any studies related to Micronesian student populations and positive deviance.

My search did reveal ample literature on the "positive deviance approach" and "Micronesians" as separate research topics but not as a cohesive unit of study. I found the Positive Deviance Initiative website: www.positivedeviance.org particularly informative about its approach, history, and applicability in a variety of settings such as healthcare, educational reform, business. A select number of books and articles (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Lapping et al., 2002; Lewis, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) offered insights into the PD approach.

Understanding the Micronesian participants experiences and behaviors entailed a review of the anthropological, historical, and geo-political literature about the region (Casey, 2001;

Grieco, 2003; Hanlon, 2014; Heine, 1974; Hezel, 2001, 1982, 2013; Hezel & Levin, 1987; Jolly, 2007; Kiste, 1985). While some of the literature was dated prior to the 1986 ratification of the Compact of Free Association (COFA) it provided useful historical information about Micronesians and the changes they have experienced transitioning from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) to today's post-COFA years.

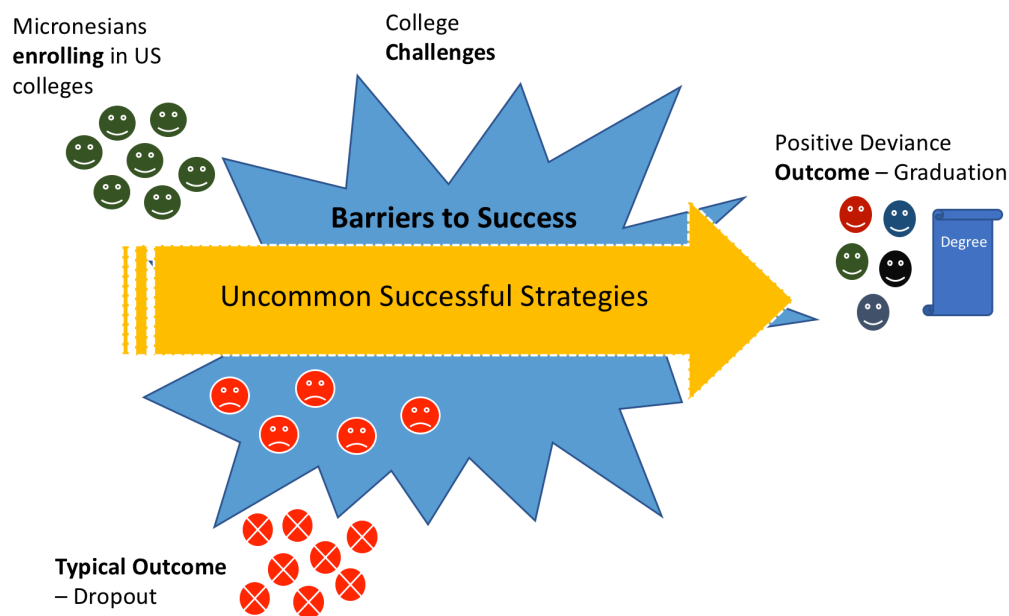
Peer reviewed research on the experiences of FSM college students in the US are very limited except for some articles and dissertations (Ah Sam & Robinson, 2000; Alaimoana-Nuusa, 2006a; Alefaio, n.d.; Casey, 2001; Hattori-Uchima, 2012; H. C. Heine, 2004; Kaneshiro, 2008b; Lamsis, 2010; Okamoto et al., 2008; Sachuo, 1988). Based on FSM census data (Hezel, 2013b; Hezel & Levin, 1987; Levin, 2014) I expanded my search to include categories of similar communities such as first generation, low income, and AAPI students (Atherton, 2014; Ching & Agbayani, 2012; Cushman, 2006; Dalton & Crosby, 2013; Morse, 1998; Nishimoto, 2004; Noddings, 1998; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Teranishi, 2012). The EPIC report on the AAPI community, "A Community of Contrasts National Hawaiian Pacific Islanders in the US," provided comprehensive data for the AAPI community, but it also confirms the lack of information particularly about FSM students in the US.

Conducting this literature review was akin to piecing together parts of a puzzle without a photo of the finished product. I made decisions as a researcher to analyze parts of other puzzles to surmise a better understanding of the participants in my study and the context of their experiences as college students in the US.

Conceptual Framework

The study utilized positive deviance as a framework for the research. It offers a unique way to focus the discussion around student assets rather than their deficits. In its simplest form the PD method engages an at-risk community by identifying the problem and finding individuals in the community who exhibit successful practices to overcome challenges. Typically, the PD methodology consists of a 5-step process of defining the problem, determining positive deviants, discovering behaviors or strategies, designing practical applications, and monitoring/evaluating to adapt further (The Positive Deviance Initiative, 2010). However, for the purpose of this study the PD method was adapted to apply its theoretical framework with a focus on the first three steps.

Figure 1. Positive Deviance Theoretical Framework



The diagram depicts Micronesian students, progress towards college graduation as their goal, the challenges facing them, typical outcomes, and the uncommon strategies of positive

deviants. Ultimately the larger problem is low retention and graduation rates of Micronesian college students. Without adequate research and data on or about Micronesian college students, institutions of higher learning have limited information to create culturally-responsive strategies that facilitate their success. This study provides additional information obtained directly from successful Micronesian students.

Higher Education Research as Colonial

The very act of researching the deficit model of college students of color particularly African Americans and Latinos and by extension Pacific Islanders, has consequently become a “reflection of colonial ideologies” (Patel, 2016, p. 16). Patel argues that higher education research, especially aimed at minority populations, must guard against becoming an exercise of privileging the privileged in academia while the problem largely persists.

Inequity in education is both so ubiquitous and so persistent that we have a nickname for it, the achievement gap, our shorthand for the disparity on educational measures between groups of students...Educational researchers have become recipients of doctorates, received tenure, been promoted, honored, and lauded for studying this gap. The gap remains. I question what functions and dysfunctions are being served by this gap, and an associative, seemingly unassailable frame that the gap can actually be closed without confronting coloniality and its key strategies. More directly, what does educational research have to do not just with the gap in achievement but also securing and perpetuating legacies of colonialization? Where is education research transcribed into and therefore beholden to maintaining the achievement gap? (p. 16)

As a Micronesian researcher studying Micronesian students, it is my responsibility to avoid becoming part of the problem by blindly pursuing the research as an academic endeavor to achieve a doctorate without genuinely seeking dignified culturally appropriate mechanisms to support student success. Research must be rooted in the purpose of the improvement of lives of students who are subject of the studies.

Indigenous Research Values

Research within the Micronesian positive deviants must entail culturally-sensitive methods befitting the variety of values, cultures, history, and beliefs within Micronesia. To that end I reviewed several similarly Pacific-focused research protocols out of Polynesia (Ministry of Education, 2001; Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Otsuka, 2006; Pacific Research and Policy Centre, n.d.; University of Otago, 2011; Vaioleti, 2006). University of Otago has formalized associations through a memorandum of understanding with University of Hawai‘i, National University of Samoa, University of the South Pacific, and other Pacific-focused institutions of higher education.

These Pacific-focused protocols out of New Zealand and Fiji share common values of “respect, reciprocity, family links and obligations, community oriented – the good of all is important, collective responsibility, older people revered – gerontocracy, humility, love / charity, service, and spirituality, most commonly associated with Christianity” (University of Otago, 2011). While these values may be practiced very differently among Micronesian communities as they most certainly are done in Polynesia, researchers must take careful steps to be aware of them and how they may influence the research process itself. The Pacific research protocol from the University of Otago (2011) identified twelve principles to guide researchers including:

- Maximizing benefits to humans
- Relationships
- Respect
- Cultural competency
- Meaningful engagement
- Reciprocity
- Utility
- Rights
- Balance
- Protection
- Capacity building
- Participation

These values are acknowledged and supported by indigenous research methods such as *talanoa*.

This research method informed development of a Chuukese *arekirek* method.

Talanoa: These principles and values of mutual respect necessitates a culturally-sensitive research approach. According to Vaioleti (2006), “*Tala* means to inform, tell, relate and command, as well as to ask or apply...*Noa* means of any kind, ordinary, nothing in particular, purely imaginary or void” (p. 23). The concept of *talanoa* as an indigenous approach to research allows for informality rooted in respect, reciprocity, and co-construction of ideas.

An open technique is employed, where the precise nature of questions has not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the Talanoa develops. The Talanoa will end when it loses its *maile* or starts to revisit areas covered already, since

then it is probable that no more new points will be added to those that have already been co-constructed. It is a respectful, reciprocating interaction. Talanoa is good conversation: one listens to the other. When to speak and what one says depends upon what the other has to say (p. 26).

Arekirek: The closest translation and cultural practice resembling *talanoa* in my Chuukese outer island language is the concept of *arekirek*. According to a Chuukese cultural expert and practitioner (Emwalu, 2017) from the island of Polowat in Chuuk State, Northwest Region, renowned for their cultural preservation, *arekirek* means “to reflect, recall, remember ideas, history, legends, solutions.” It is applied as an invitation to collective solution-seeking in mixed gender settings such as a community gathering or church meeting. It is especially effective in same gender groupings such as a men’s canoe house or women’s taro batches or cooking huts or in the more formal settings among elders and navigators who teach cultural knowledge known as *merak haki* (unfurling of the pandanus mat). The root word *lerak* refers to the season in the Pattiw islands when breadfruit is harvested and saved as *mar* (fermented breadfruit) in preparation for the *leefang* season of drought and planting. *Arakirak* is more appropriate for a research process which requires informality and a sense of equality between the researcher and respondents. In fact, when invited into a process of *arekirek*, according to Emwalu, the participants share equal responsibility to seek answers to whatever problem is being addressed. That entire process requires mutual respect much like the *talanoa* method.

Micronesian Values

Studying Micronesians as a unit can prove difficult given the dearth of information on the region, nation, and as the newest migrants to Guam and Hawai‘i. College students from the FSM

and those US-born to Micronesian parents represent differing values which may impact their college experience. Micronesians share many values with other Pacific Islanders (Kiste, 1985) which have survived 200 years of foreign exploitation. Kiste (1985) attributed to Epeli Hau'ofa, the renowned Pacific scholar, anthropologist, and poet, the identification of "the most important indigenous values held by Pacific Islanders." These values include: 1) community over individualism, 2) shared resources, 3) rootedness in place and continuity of social norms, 4) interpersonal relationship, 5) creativity and flexibility in information preservation, 6) self-reliance, 7) respect for others, and 8) the importance of arts & entertainment.

As individuals mature and experience different interactions, values can change which require educators to be mindful in their understanding of cultures and to not apply stereotypes across all members. Hau'ofa (1985) cautioned that with changes occurring throughout the Pacific, the challenge is "to pinpoint the directions of change in indigenous values" (p. 160). He then set out to expand on the changes and their influence on these long-standing indigenous values of Pacific peoples. These values help one understand a common dynamic of indigenous people of Micronesia despite colonialism, religious domination, and political transformations.

To provide a context of Micronesian cultural practices that may empower or hinder Micronesian college students in America, I chose to reference the book, "Making Sense of Micronesia: The Logic of Pacific Islander Culture" (2013) by Francis X. Hezel, SJ, a respected authority and prolific historian on Micronesia. Hezel provides an overview of his understanding, research, and lived experiences residing among the people of Micronesia. While his writings are often considered authentic, even he admits that it takes a lifetime of trial and error to gain "genuine understanding" of Micronesian culture (p.165). Hezel sheds light on characteristics of

Micronesian culture such as a communal orientation, addressing conflict, respect, and family obligations. I mention them here because they may contribute to positive deviance in college students.

Community over Individual: Micronesians are generally a community-oriented people who consider individual success as less important to communal well-being (Hezel, 2013). Hezel writes about the tendency of Micronesians to sacrifice individual identity for the betterment of the community. He uses the example of young people who make the difficult decision to go off island for college in personal pursuit of an education with the goal of returning home to help their community or family. A college education, therefore, is less about personal achievement as it is about securing a job to support the community. He states,

“For all their friendliness and good-natured charm, islanders seem to be an embodiment of the old caricature: people who ‘go along in order to get along.’ If cultures were plotted on a scale from individualistic to group-minded, island societies will always run off the latter end of the scale” (p.25).

Avoiding Conflict: Another cultural practice worth noting is the way Micronesians deal with conflict. Micronesians tend to avoid direct confrontation or any semblance of conflict. In a college setting where student success depends on their decision-making skills daily (Galotti, et al, 2014), dealing with conflicts become paramount. The tendency towards conflict factors into a college student’s success if relatives or friends overstay their welcome in a student’s dorm or apartment. Micronesians would rather avoid the appearance of conflict by remaining silent.

Demonstrating Respect: Showing respect is a key component of Micronesian culture (Casey, 2001; Engle, 2008; Hezel, 2013; Kaneshiro, 2008; Marshall, 2004; Ratliffe, 2011; Smith,

Smith, & Twaddle, 2014). It is especially afforded to elders, chiefs, and other people in positions of authority. Often teachers are the only paid professionals in most villages and islands and are therefore highly honored and respected. In Pacific Island cultures, silence is considered a virtue to maintain communal peace and demonstrate respect. Speaking out of turn and asking questions in these settings is considered disrespectful.

Obligation to Family: An important aspect of Micronesian culture is the obligation to extended family members and the family structure (Casey, 2001; Okamoto et al., 2008; Ratliffe, 2011; Rubinstein & Levin, 1992; Stoicovy, 1997). While family obligation itself is not unique to the Micronesian migrant experience in the US, Ratliffe (2011) argues that it is worth considering as a critical lens to examine academic success because of their “strong collectivist orientation” (p.6) which affects their decisions and priorities around education.

“Understanding family obligations can be an important window into the cultures themselves, assisting teachers and administrators to better interpret family priorities and behaviors...” (p. 6).

Family obligation factors into Micronesian college student success because it can be a motivating force for success. In some cases family obligation becomes a burden on the student financially, socially, and in time devoted to meeting obligatory responsibilities. Those who have the ability to travel abroad for employment or education are expected to support the families back home either through remittances, hosting other family members in their home, and other engagement in familial activities (Hezel, 1982, 2013; Levin, 2014).

Education in Micronesia

To understand the educational experiences of Micronesians in the US requires an awareness of the history and reality of formal education in the region. Formal education in Micronesia has followed the accompanying systems of foreign colonial administrations in power beginning with the Spaniards, Germans, Japanese, and most recently the American government. Each succeeding regime brought its own brand of educational system to “civilize” the natives into their ideologies. Hezel (1982) states that education is the “most insidious, and most successful, instrument of colonialization yet devised by a foreign administration” (p. 53) including German language schools, Christian mission schools, and other forms of educational endeavors.

The American government began its own administration of the region after WWII when the United Nations mandated these islands as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) to the United States. From Palau in the West to the far eastern most islands of Pohnpei all the way to the northern Marshall Islands, the TTPI was important to the US for strategic military purposes. Under the Kennedy Administration, education became the focal point of its agenda “to enhance the Americanization of Micronesia, with the view of affecting a positive outcome for continued US hegemony” (Conklin, 1984, p.11). Outlined in the secretive document known as the “Solomon Report” (Conklin, 1984), the US called for universal education with the promise of admitting Micronesians into US colleges to further American interest. Peace Corps Volunteers were instrumental in furthering the American educational systems by teaching in local public schools throughout Micronesia.

The FSM Department of Education oversees educational endeavors throughout the nation. As formal education in the FSM continues to adapt to a cash economy, a college degree most certainly guarantees a higher paying job. As Micronesians become more aware of the low performance rates in the nation's public school system, more parents are opting to take advantage of the COFA immigration provision and seek better education in the US. The influx of Micronesian citizens to the US specifically Guam, Saipan, and Hawai'i has created its own social problems (Palafox et al., 2011; Rubinstein & Levin, 1992; Yamada, 2012).

Since the COFA treaty was ratified in 1986 essentially opening the US borders to the COFA nations, there has been an increase in the migration of Micronesians to the nearest US border states of Hawai'i and Guam (Heine, 1974; Hezel, 1982, 1995; Kiste, 1993; Severance, 1993). That population is likely to continue to grow as more parents want better education, healthcare, and opportunities for their children. There have been a few articles and dissertations (Casey, 2001; Kaneshiro, 2008; Stoicovy, 1997) focused on the unique experiences of Micronesian migrants in Hawai'i and Guam. Generally, the findings point to the importance of providing a learning environment that honors the cultural backgrounds of Micronesian students in the United States. Like the common story of migrant children, the more these students connect to their cultural identity and heritage and feel a sense of home, the more they are likely to be successful in school.

Micronesian Perceptions of College Experiences

Barber's (2009) study provided a foundation to examine significant changes to the experiences of Micronesian college students in a similarly positioned American institution. Barber interviewed 13 Micronesian college students attending the University of Guam to

determine how culture shaped their college experiences and their perceptions of a learning environment. Furthermore, the study looked at factors that inhibit learning for Micronesian college students. It concluded with recommendations to develop culturally appropriate support systems for this target population in the US. In this section I will focus on the most relevant barriers to learning for Micronesian students to help determine the gaps. More importantly, understanding some of these barriers will help me to identify the challenges of positive deviants in my study and what they would need to be successful in their pursuit of higher education.

Barber (2009) identified three factors in the college classroom environment that served as barriers to learning for Micronesian students. First, for “cultural communication protocols” Barber discussed how Micronesian students struggled to participate in class discussions because of their cultural norms and expectations to remain silent in group settings especially when elders and chiefs were present. Silence in the presence of elders is considered respectful and demonstrates deference to those in authoritative positions. Heine (2002) pointed out this “cultural mismatch” (page 6) in her briefing paper entitled “Culturally Responsive Schools for Immigrant Students” in which she provided helpful tips for Hawai‘i’s public schools. Secondly, Barber (2009) identified long lectures as barriers to learning for students in general, but for Micronesian students who struggle with English as the language of instruction, I find this not unusual because of the general dislike for long lectures among the Micronesian student participants. Thirdly, perceived teacher incompetence was identified as a barrier to learning for Micronesian college students (Barber, 2009, p. 122). According to the study, teacher incompetence included instructor’s lack of pacing during class lectures to enable comprehension, unpreparedness for class instruction, and “inappropriate manner and decorum,” (p. 122).

The classroom experiences were part of the totality of a student's college environment that can influence learning. There were also external factors identified in Barber's (2009) study. Money was the most widely discussed factor among his participants that influenced their college experience. Micronesian students struggled with lack of financial means to support their livelihood as well as the ability to manage their limited resources. This issue continues to be a factor for Micronesian students many of whom come from extended families with a single earner on a government wage. In fact, as the economic provisions of the COFA become even more restrictive/limited, financial challenges may serve as a compelling barrier to a college education.

Limitations of Current Institutional Data on Micronesians in the US

Minority communities in the US have seen a large population increase according to the 2010 US census. Among the largest growing minority groups are the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Hispanic groups. Yet a number of AAPI researchers and advocates (Ching & Agbayani, 2012; McGregor, 2004; Morse & Hammer, 1998; Nishimoto, 2004; Teranishi, 2012b) point out the limitations of the AAPI designations for a heterogeneous community with varying degrees of successes, challenges, cultural norms, and assimilation issues. Micronesians as a subset of Pacific Islanders within the larger context of the AAPI community are even more at a disadvantage because of the sheer lack of disaggregated data and studies about this new migrant community. Researchers and advocates call for further disaggregation of the Pacific Islanders (Museus, Maramba, & Ternashi, 2013; Ternishi, 2012).

Pacific Islanders have been consolidated into the general minority AAPI category. The term, "model minority" emerged in the 1960s first used by William Peterson (1966), a sociologist who noted the success stories of Japanese Americans as a model American minority.

The term was used later to generalize AAPI communities as successful in assimilating to American life.

PIs are hardly model minorities given the lack of disaggregated data. According to the CARE report, the racial and ethnic categorization of AAPIs include 29 ethnic groups: Asian Indian, Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malaysian, Nepalese, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Thai, Vietnamese, other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan, Guamanian, Marshallese, Fijian, other Polynesian, other Micronesian, and other Melanesian. Even within these general categories exist linguistic and historical differences. The US Census highlighted that AAPIs excel in educational attainment compared to other racial groups (US Census Bureau, 2009) discounting the true individual ethnic categorizations described above.

Yi & Museus (2016) critique the “model minority myth” in the United States typically associated with Asian Americans. Other researchers suggest that Pacific Islanders as a unique unit of study within the AAPI community struggle with a lack of disaggregated data and studies (Blanchard, 2014; Ching & Agbayani, 2012; Museus, 2013). Teranishi (2012) states,

The AAPI population is a socially constructed category of people with a high degree of heterogeneity with regard to ethnicity, immigration history, language, religion, and social status. Generalizations about AAPI students miss high secondary school drop-out rates, low rates of college participation, and low college completion rates among some of its sub-populations. Disaggregated data reveal a wide range of characteristics and the needs and challenges of its most vulnerable sub-groups (p. 22).

The lack of disaggregated data about Micronesian students in higher education, both in terms of the Micronesian region and Micronesia as the FSM, poses an institutional challenge. Unless provided some form of professional development, university faculty and staff may lack a full understanding of the uniqueness of these students. That has implications on their success on both the student and academic affairs side of the institutions. Similar to national data groups, Micronesians are misunderstood as a homogenous group regardless of the unique languages, cultures, history, and educational settings. Without disaggregated data for Micronesians, institutions may mistakenly provide a one-size fits all approach to PI students. Teranishi (2012) concludes with a “call to action” to leaders in US institutions of higher education to disaggregate their AAPI data to ensure proper support services for the target population,

It is important to disaggregate the data about your institution's AAPI student population and then act accordingly. Are your regional recruitment efforts reaching the most marginalized and vulnerable sub-groups in the AAPI community, for instance? Do certain support services need to be developed or enhanced for them? Is there additional information you need to have in order to respond more effectively to the unique needs and challenges of your current AAPI student body? (p.22).

The lack of disaggregated data for Micronesians in Hawai‘i is equally challenging.

College Readiness

Formal education in the FSM is the responsibility of the National Department of Education (NDOE). Every year since 2010, the NDOE administers the National Minimum Competency Test (NMCT) throughout the nation’s middle and high schools to assess the “effectiveness of the National Curriculum Minimum Standards which are implemented in

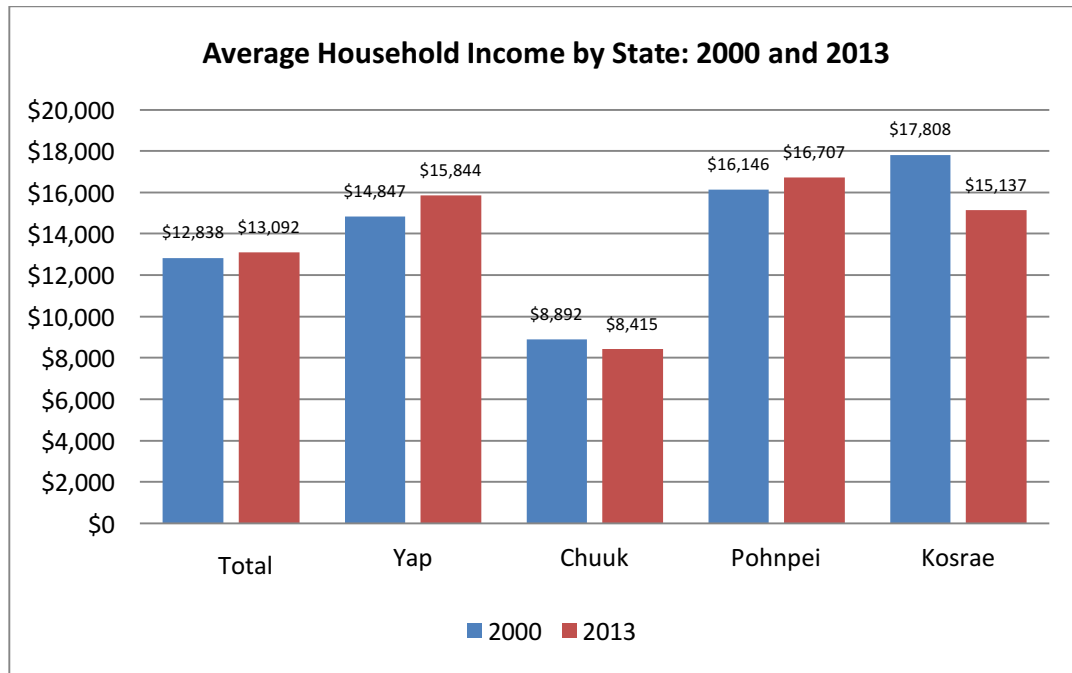
schools across the FSM” (National JEMCO 21 Indicators 2014-15, page 7) for math and English language arts. If standardized testing provides a reliable indication of students’ academic preparedness for college, then the NMCT results seem to indicate that Micronesian students are academically unprepared for the academic rigor in most American universities.

According to Fredrick (2015) between 2012-2015, the benchmarks for competency among FSM’s 10th graders has grown by about three percentage points. In the 2012-2013 school year 33% of tenth graders in the FSM met or exceeded competency expectations. Two years later during the 2014-2015 academic year that national number grew to 39%. However, it is even worse when one drills down to particular states. In Chuuk State, for example, those numbers are alarmingly lower at 19% in 2012-2013 and improved slightly two years later to only 27%. These statistics illuminate the potential impediment of academic preparedness facing FSM students who attend schools in the US.

Low-income, First Generation

According to Levin (2017), the average household income in the FSM is well below \$20,000 qualifying families as low-income in the US as shown by the table below.

Table 1. Average Household Income by State



According to Levin (2017),

The average household incomes of heads 60 years and over increased during the period from 2000 to 2013, with the household incomes with heads 60 to 69 increasing by almost \$4,000 when adjusted for inflation. However, the household incomes for younger heads decreased considerably, by around \$5,000 a year for those younger than 40. Part of the reason for this was the difficulty in getting any jobs, and so supply and demand came into play. And, part of the reason for that was the continued step downs in US Compact payments, and so fewer soft-funded jobs, and fewer government jobs in general, and fewer private sector jobs to support the government job holders.

Based on Levin's findings, one would conclude that many Micronesian students coming from the region start their college experience already at a financial disadvantage. In fact, many

Micronesians qualify into the federal programs at UH Hilo and elsewhere for first generation college students from lower socio economic means.

College preparation was not a part of the American hegemonic educational policies during nation-building years of the Trust Territory (Conklin, 1984). Prior to the US administration following WWII, education by the Spaniards, Germans, and Japanese colonial powers ranged from moral development to religious instructions, linguistic to indoctrination (Hezel, 1984). Micronesians did take advantage of the ability to attend colleges in the US. In fact, Micronesians could only enter and stay in the US on the I-20 immigration form as long as they enrolled full-time in an accredited institution. Since the Compact's ratification in 1986 creating open migration to the US, many Micronesians left the islands for economic opportunities creating a "brain drain" (Hezel, 2013; Hezel & Levin, 1987). Without adequate data on the demographics of Micronesian students attending colleges in the US, one can only surmise that the Micronesian student population in the US matches, if it is not worse than the AAPI data indicating first generation and low income students (Ah Sam, 2005; Pang, Han, & Pang, 2011; Poon et al., 2016). It is likely that many Micronesian college students in the US are the first in their families to graduate from a 4-year university. As such their struggles are not unlike those of other similar migrant first generation communities in the US (Alaimoana-Nuusa, 2006; Atherton, 2014; Cushman, 2006; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Hang, 2015) .

Studies by Engle & Tinto (2008) show that even with high percentages of college participation in the world, low-income, minority, and first-generation students still lag behind their White counterparts in the US. Their analysis of data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Beginning Postsecondary Study (2001), illustrated that first-generation, low-

income students, who disproportionately come from ethnic and racial minority communities are at a greater risk of failure in postsecondary education. In the same study, Engle & Tinto (2008) pointed out,

Research has shown that low-income and first-generation students are less likely to be engaged in the academic and social experiences that foster success in college, such as studying in groups, interacting with faculty and other students, participating in extracurricular activities, and using support services. Lower levels of academic and social integration among this population are inextricably linked to finances and financial aid (p. 3).

Cultural Adaptation & Sense of Belonging

Managing the cultural and educational expectations in a foreign educational institution is a challenge for any immigrant living in the US. Although Micronesian college students attended American school systems in their home islands, those schools focused on academic preparedness and not the equally important social and cultural adaptation skills necessary to survive in the US. Studies show that succeeding in an American institution is difficult enough for first year American students (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; Hoffman, 2002) due to factors often beyond the students' control. Students have to adapt to: shifting cultures on college campuses, struggling to feel a sense of belonging, and culturally incongruent class activities,

...students' sense of efficacy for succeeding in class and their perception of the value of tasks required in class were quite strongly associated with their sense of belonging. Our findings suggested that students' sense of belonging is...enhanced when instruction is well designed and implemented...specific emphasis on student participation and

interaction with classmates. In terms of the specific emphasis on student participation and interaction with classmates, that finding may be understood in terms of freshman students' developmental status as late adolescents. Facilitating students' interactions with peers and providing a forum in which they can explore and solidify their opinions and identities may be an important factor in providing an appropriate environmental fit for their developmental needs (Freeman et al., 2007, p. 217).

Positive Deviance (PD)

In this section I focus on the positive deviance approach as a research inquiry method for the study. First, a brief historical overview of PD is provided, then followed by a conceptualization of the PD framework, its applicability, and lastly the impact of PD using data from the website (www.positivedeviance.org) by the Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI).

History

According to the PDI, positive deviance originally appeared in the 60's in nutritional research literature. It was later refined by a team of researchers in the 90's (Zeitlin, 1991; Zeitlin et al., 1990) with the conclusion that well-nourished children exist in the midst of at-risk and the poorest families in communities with high levels of childhood malnutrition. Zeitlin (1991) proposed a strength-based approach to helping families with malnourished children. In its simplest form, Zeitlin claimed that in every community with the same resources and challenges there are individuals or groups that use uncommon strategies to improve their situation. By identifying and documenting the strategies and behaviors of the successful individuals or groups, they amplified the community-based assets to improve the community rather than focusing on fixing community deficits (The Positive Deviance Initiative, 2010).

In 1990, Jerry and Monique Sternin (Pascale et al., 2010) adapted the positive deviance approach to their community development efforts to solve pervasive childhood malnutrition in poor villages in Vietnam. The Vietnamese government requested the help of a non-government organization *Save the Children* where the Sternins worked as program development practitioners. At that time, the Vietnamese government estimated that 60 - 70 percent of Vietnamese children under five years old suffered from some degree of malnutrition (Sternin, 2003; Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010). On a 2014 TEDTalk, Monique Sternin shared that their job as explained to them by a government official from the Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to, “not only rehabilitate malnourished children, but keep them healthy...in six months” (Sternin, 2014). Without a budget, feeding program, nutrition expertise, or even support from the Communist regime, the Sternins began their attempt to solve a country’s children malnutrition issue.

Against all odds, the Sternins decided to operationalize the PD approach which they had just learned about before heading to Vietnam. They set out to train local community leaders to identify poor families who have healthy well-nourished children (positive deviants). After studying and observing the uncommon practices of positive deviant families, they set out to create opportunities for these local positive deviant parents to teach other parents their practices. After showing immediate impact, the strategies were then replicated widely to affect the same positive outcome in families with malnourished children. At the end of the year, over one million children were successfully rehabilitated.

The success of the Sternins in adapting this approach for behavioral and social change led to replication in other sectors such as business, education, healthcare, and vulnerable group advocacy efforts (Pascale, et al, 2010). Since then the approach has been adapted and

implemented by organizations such as UNICEF, USAID, and the Peace Corps, to solve improbable social, educational, and development challenges locally, nationally, and internationally in over 40 countries (Sternin, 2014). Today, the same concept is being applied to improve low performing schools in the United States and indigenous communities. Pascale et al. (2010) defined positive deviants as “...a few individuals or groups who have found uncommon practices and behaviors that enable them to achieve better solutions to problems than others within the community who face the same challenges and barriers” (p. 183).

Conceptualizing PD

As a research framework, positive deviance provides an asset-based approach to solving intractable problems. Its uniqueness lies in its focus on successful outliers with similar struggles and challenges in a community. Conventionally, statistical research requires a careful analysis of the mean of a population applying a normal Bell Curve with standard deviation where outliers are treated as an anomaly. Positive deviance focuses on those outliers (positive deviants) to determine how their success can provide strategies for the rest of the population.

The PD approach provides a community-focused approach to interventions. Their findings point to the failure of needs-based methods that do not lead to success because “local populations are unable to obtain or maintain what has been identified as missing (Lapping et al., 2002, p. 128).”

Lewis (2009) argues that the unique feature of PD is the “highly practical approach to formulating and reframing the problem and in learning from existing practice within resources that are already available (p. 283).” Related to successful college students, the PD approach identifies existing knowledge and cultural practices of students that facilitate their persistence in

college. Ultimately, PD is about acting on inherent wisdom that may not always be readily visible. When compared to traditional approaches to change, PD excels as a “rich tool for change management which yields creativity, innovation and long-term solutions (Lewis, 2009, p. 45). The table below from Lewis (2007) best defines the differences between traditional versus positive deviance approaches.

Table 2. Traditional vs PD Approach to Change

Traditional approach	Positive Deviance approach
Management identifies the “problem” and benefit to the organization of solving it	The people affected identify the problem and the benefit to them of solving it
Management owns the data that measures the problem and monitors progress	The people are facilitated to develop their own data and use to make the problem concrete and to quantify solutions
Ownership and momentum for change come from above – leadership is through traditional project management processes	The people are offered help to solve their own problems; they own the problem and its solution; those affected are coached and facilitated through the journey of change
Deficit-based-finding what is wrong	Asset-based - finding what is right, amplifying successful practices
Improvements are brought in from outside, through experts, benchmarking, etc.	Improvements are spread from the inside outwards, by finding existing solutions and amplifying them
Improvement strategies are driven by logic-	Improvement comes from seeing and

people are expected to think their way into a new way of acting, emotion and other non-rational resistance tend to be underrated	experiencing a different way of working – acting their way into a new way of thinking, using their own data to see improvement
“Transparent rejection” can occur through resistance to practices imported from outside (the non-invented-here syndrome)	Self-replication occurs – latent wisdom is tapped and visible/tangible benefits are delivered quickly by the people, for the people
Flow of thought is from problem identification and solving to the solution identification; best practices are applied within defined parameters	Flow of thought starts with problem definition but move straightforward to those who have found a solution within the community and context
Focus starts on those who are directly associated with the problem – easy to fall into a blame culture	Starts by getting perspectives from all potential stakeholders and focuses on those who have found a solution without “putting them in the frame”.

Source: Lewis, 2009

Applicability of Positive Deviance

The adaptability of the positive deviance approach for behavioral and social change in an indigenous educational setting is particularly appropriate. This community-based approach provides a sustainable method to solve intractable social and educational problems especially as organizations, governments, and schools struggle with diminished funding for external consultants and systems. The positive deviance approach puts emphasis on finding existing

solutions from within the organizations and communities rather than seeking outside best practices to solve local issues.

Pascale and Sternin (2005) describe the positive deviance approach as being particularly different from typical approaches to social and community change efforts. First, the PD approach focuses on community assets rather than its deficits. In other words, once the problem is defined, then the community or organization identifies successful members and their strategies in overcoming the problem. The reliance on internal assets enables locally-produced solutions thereby avoiding external influences. Secondly, while other approaches rely on an organizational leader to conceptualize and drive the change process, the positive deviance approach requires a leader to serve in a facilitator role while the community pursues the four major components of the process namely: define, determine, discover, and design (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010).

Define. The foundation of the positive deviance approach requires a communal process of defining the problem facing the community and identifying a desired solution by the community. It is important in this early process to have the right stakeholders in the community who understand the needs and can arrive at consensus about the desired outcome. Historically, the issues were typically defined by external influences, people who had their own agenda, and the potential solutions were conceptualized differently than those from the local community. In this step, the community must agree on the change and the timeline within which they expect to accomplish the goals. Pascale et al (2010) further recommended the need to use existing data or create some baseline data to help track progress.

Determine. Following the communal definition of the problem, the next step entails determining the presence of positive deviants in the community and their normative practices. This can only happen if the community clearly articulates for themselves their vision of what constitutes a successful outcome. While this is an on-going process, some common practices to determine the presence of positive deviants might include facilitating community discussions, focus groups, or interviews. Gathering more information will lead to continued improvement of the “key measures of success” (Positive Action, 2007, p. 44).

Discover. The next step in this process requires learning the actual practices of the positive deviants using a variety of information gathering techniques. Most notably focus groups, interviews, and observations to document the behaviors, techniques, and activities that clearly result in successfully overcoming the problem. Sternins’ PD project to solve children’s malnutrition in Vietnam relied on trained community facilitators who conducted these data collection initiatives and reported back through team feedback sessions (Pascale, et al, 2010).

Design. In this final stage of the process, the community begins to design activities and strategies based on the previous stages using the data collected and implementing activities. (Pascale, et al,2010).

It should be noted that monitoring and evaluating the activities occurs at every stage of this 4-step process. Being aware of change occurring and setbacks enable the community to discern the effectiveness of the project and make necessary adjustments accordingly. Pascale, et al (2010) maintain that, “It is easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way into a new way of acting” (p. 4). This illustrates how the method requires active involvement of community members in affecting the needed outcome. It relies on communal

ownership of the problem, the identification of the uncommon practices of the positive deviants within the community, and the replication of those successful strategies and practices to solve the problem. Lewis (2009) dedicated the following quote to Pascale to describe the kind of leaders needed for facilitating the PD process in a community,

Go to the people. Live with them. Learn from them. Appreciate them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. And with the best of leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say: ‘We have done this ourselves’. Lao Tzu

Impact of PD

While the positive deviance approach is relatively new in the realm of change inquiry, it is important to note its impact in the US and internationally extends beyond its founding in childhood malnutrition research and development. According to the Positive Deviance Initiative, the PD approach is well documented with several notable accomplishments in 41 countries ranging from reduced childhood malnutrition to increased student retention rates.

Lewis (2009) best describes what I consider the greatest strength of this approach for indigenous communities such as Micronesians.

“Self-determination is a key element in positive deviance - the whole exercise is owned and driven by the community... PD exercises meet individual and group needs for autonomy, feeling confident in what you are doing, and in making human connections, all of which are part of self-determination...promote positive emotions... broaden and build your personal development and which enhances resilience (p. 286).”

Conclusions

The literature review has shown a dearth of information specifically on Micronesian positive deviants in higher education. Yet, it provided a context from which I formulated the study methodology. The indigenous research protocol served as a lens through which I conducted the research with fellow indigenous Micronesians using my own experience as context. Hezel (2013) provided an overview of some of the key Micronesian cultural values which could impact a Micronesian college student in an American college setting. The main research framework is centered around the asset-based PD method, applicability, context, and its impact on education and other social settings.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodological approach of the study. It starts with my rationale for the choice of the study topic and my role in the study rooted in the context of action research and indigenous research methodology as a Micronesian researcher-practitioner. It is followed by the research design, questions the study sought to answer, the setting, participants, and concludes with an explanation of data collection and analysis methods.

Rationale

As an indigenous Micronesian leader, I became concerned with the university's deficit-oriented approach to student support services for Pacific Islander students. Like many institutions, student support services are framed entirely by deficit-oriented data such as low retention and graduation rates, absent richer data that is more informative and culturally appropriate.

Micronesian students are much more than what their academic status implies. Most recent data indicate that of the 200 PI students at the university, more are persisting and graduating than those who dropped out or dismissed. Yet reporting structures to funders focused on a linear approach of solving the academic problems of those who were struggling with efforts to keep them at the university. These deficit-oriented reporting mechanisms, while important baseline for funders, continue to perpetuate the stereotypes in the larger community.

Successful students of which there were many were not recognized and more importantly not honored. Their stories were lost amidst interventions of solving student retention rates. What were these successful students doing to succeed? What were their habits and strategies for

success? What inspired them to persist on a path of success amidst the same environment, limited resources, and opportunities? That, and the journey in my doctoral program, into indigenous methodologies began to change my outlook and strategies on student support services. Could we enable our successful students to influence their peers toward a path of success? Is there a way to build support programs that focus more on assets rather than deficits?

Theoretical Framework

“Deciding to take action usually means actively deciding to question your own motives, and treating your findings and interpretations critically, suspending your judgments, and being open to other people’s point of view. You need to accept that other people may be better informed than you are.” (McNiff, 2013, p. 40).

This study combines action research and indigenous methodology within a Positive Deviance framework. McNiff (2013) defines action research as the act of “improving learning in order to influence improvement of the social context in which... the researcher resides” (p. 35). The researcher actively engages in the research to improve one’s practice. In this context my position as a Micronesian researcher practitioner contributes to the research design and data collection. As a Micronesian educator supporting the success of Micronesian students in higher education, my experience of the practice becomes part of the research methodology. It is particularly useful in the context of schools seeking to improve practice.

As an asset-based inquiry process, the PD approach informs the theoretical framework and methodology of this study. At its core, Positive Deviance focuses on the strengths of an at-risk community narrowed to the most successful members (positive deviants) whose uncommon practices warrant understanding for possible replication. Qualitative interviews are an

appropriate method to obtain knowledge of those behaviors and strategies. Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin (2010, p. 161) state that “questions can be more transformative than answers.” Patton (2001) states that interviews allow for in-depth examination of the person’s views, experiences, knowledge, values, and perceptions.

The design of the research focused on the PD approach of community development. In its basic form, positive deviance assumes that in every struggling community there are individuals who manage to effectively succeed even with the same resources and set of challenges (Singhal, 2013). The positive deviance approach is to find these outliers (positive deviants), study their behaviors and strategies, and replicate them in the same community to positively improve the situation. Instead of basing conclusions from the mean sample, the goal in the PD framework is to determine the outliers and focus on their successful habits and strategies to improve the rest of the population. Or more appropriately to “focus on the successful exceptions” (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010).

Micronesian students as the unit of analysis dictated how I designed my interview process. Most participants were raised in cultures in which in-depth interviews were a foreign practice. Our sense of community living necessitated an indigenous research approach. For that, I utilized my knowledge of Micronesian approaches to information gathering within a community. The process honors informality, trust, and is dependent on relationships. It is not overtly direct or linear. The *talanoa* research methodology (Vaiote, 2006) allows informality into the interview process, a respectful face-to-face conversation similar to the outer island Chuukese concept of *arakirak* (Emwalu, 2017, Personal communication). In the process of *arakirak* people are simply sharing ideas freely in a free-spirited, relaxed, respectful dialogue.

My relationship as the elder researcher with my youthful participants during the data collection phase, resulted in a research topic that was purposeful from participant selection to need identification. Thus, the desired actions and solutions emerged from the *talanoa* process (McNiff, 2010, McNiff & Whitehead, 2010, Sagor, 2011).

Research Questions

This study illuminates practices, values, and views of the Micronesian college student participants in the study as described in the primary research question.

“What strategies and practices do highly successful indigenous adult Micronesian students employ to succeed in higher education in Hawai‘i?”

It also provides practical insights in response to the secondary question, “What can institutions of higher education in Hawai‘i learn from a strength-based, positive deviance approach that informs student support services programs to facilitate the success of indigenous college students?”

Setting

There is no doubt that the experiences of Micronesian college students abroad are varied, necessitating their stories be told. The University of Hawai‘i at Hilo provides the ideal setting for this study. Located in the small town of Hilo, UH Hilo has historically admitted the largest population of PI students compared to the other 10 campuses (McMahill, 2015) in the University of Hawai‘i System. For the past 40 years, UH Hilo invested major resources to recruit, retain, and graduate students from the US-affiliated COFA nations in addition to students from other Pacific jurisdictions such as Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

The study was conducted during the 2016-2017 academic year in which there were 200 self-identified Pacific Islander students of which 78 were Micronesians specifically from the FSM. In 2014, the Chronicle of Higher Education named UH Hilo as “the country’s most-diverse four-year institution” (Retrieved from website: <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Almanac-2014-Diversity/148173>) reflective of the country’s rising AAPI population. Having a large population size afforded me the luxury of determining which members of the PI student community to study and develop questions of interest based on that population. At the same time, the culturally diverse PI students would have been prohibitively too large a sample size to narrow down to the ideal number for an in-depth qualitative research project (Patton, 2002).

UH Hilo has a long history of serving Micronesian students, all of which are served by the Pacific Islander Student Center (PISC). As the former director of the PISC, I had access to potential participants and could identify those who qualified as positive deviants.

Participants

Sample

To obtain a broad range of perspectives and avoid skewness of the data, I utilized a purposeful stratified sampling of 12 adult college students enrolled at UH Hilo who self-identified as being from any of the four FSM states of Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap and persisted at UH Hilo for four or more consecutive semesters with a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above, full-time status. The minimum cumulative GPA represents the institutional requirement for “good academic standing.” UH Hilo defines such a student “as maintaining an undergraduate or post-baccalaureate UH Hilo cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 or a graduate UH Hilo cumulative GPA of at least a 3.0.” (Retrieved December 2016 from

<https://hilo.hawaii.edu/catalog/attendance-satisfactory-progress>). Efforts were made to recruit a diverse sample of students who represented different genders, languages, citizenships, majors, attendance at public or private high schools, and students from both low-lying atolls (outer islands) and central islands. I also included students who were born and/or raised in Hawai‘i and attended Hawai‘i public schools to further round out my sample.

Participant Profiles

Participants were students who often access the Pacific Islander Student Center (PISC) at UH Hilo. As the former director of the PISC I interacted with all the participants in a variety of ways. While there were ethical considerations in working with former students and the larger Micronesian community, this incredible access to participants positively contributed to the study in applying an indigenous research methodology. Potential participants were identified using academic standing as the first defining characteristic of positive deviancy. The table below describes the study participants.

Table 3. Study Participants Profiles

Participants Type	n=12
Female	5
Male	7
Educated in FSM	7
Educated in Hawai‘i	5
Community College-transferred	3

High School Entry	8
Seniors	4
Juniors	4
Sophomore	1
Recent alum (1 st Year Graduate)	3
Chuukese	3
Kosraean	3
Pohnpeian	3
Yapese	3

Researcher as Participant

The foundation of Indigenous research lies within the reality of the lived Indigenous experience. Indigenous researchers ground their research knowingly in the lives of real persons as individuals and social beings, not on the world of ideas. (Wilson, 2008, p. 60)

I have been excited to learn more about the indigenous research paradigm within the broader context of post-colonialism. As an indigenous Micronesian I am taking ownership of my role as a researcher in the lives of the community from which I was born and raised. It is becoming very important to me to learn as much as I can about the indigenous research paradigm. My research into formal indigenous Micronesian research methodology failed to find any other than those designed by Polynesian scholars and researchers (Ministry of Education,

2001; Pacific Research and Policy Centre, n.d.; L. T. Smith, 2012; University of Otago, 2011; Vaioleti, 2006).

The research methodology focuses on what I consider as the most important aspect of the Micronesian culture, i.e. relationships. I wanted to know if there are alternative protocols out there that focus specifically on this aspect of the lived experiences of indigenous peoples wherein the researcher is part of those wide and deep relationships. In other words, can an indigenous Chuukese researcher conduct authentic research within his/her community while maintaining a balance between objective scholarship and subjective viewpoints born out of personal lived experiences? Is there a place in the European / American educational systems for authentic traditions, ceremonies, cultural norms and values of the Chuukese community and resulting scholarship?

I was aware that I did not particularly want to learn about or compare my own with other Polynesian research protocols nor did I want to validate my experiences and desires based on theirs. Both obviously are valid and worth pursuing, but my doctoral journey has become a de-education of all the foreign concepts I have been learning since kindergarten to graduate schools. The dissertation journey is an opportunity to deconstruct these foreign, mostly American, concepts, values, language, and words to authenticate my own Chuukese Way.

Wilson (2008) writes about research as ceremony. His views resonated with me, and were transformational and almost cathartic. It provided the setting to understand my deepest desires to *de-educate* myself and *re-claim* my indigenous identity and roots. By de-education I mean the process by which I am beginning to disclaim every Western-focused, American-influenced, post-colonialist epistemology which I have learned in the American school system since my

childhood. Throughout my 50 years of formal education, I have not claimed any expertise in any of the knowledge, skills, values that are authentically ours in the Northwest islands of Chuuk.

Completing this doctorate will probably label me as one of the “educated” Chuukese among a handful of others who have endured and achieved this feat of a Western-focused label of the elite. Yet I will have little to no knowledge of all that a *pwo* navigator has to learn through years of apprenticeship and character development to achieve that indigenous equivalent of a doctorate. Wilson’s book has provided for me the added internal push to emancipate myself from this belief that a dissertation, followed by the letters Ed.D. after my name constitutes an authentic label of wisdom. It does help me understand that it is needed to be able to speak and understand the language of the oppressors.

And so I shall zealously continue on this journey but not at the expense of rejecting my ontological framework as an indigenous researcher. In fact, I have the responsibility to be accountable to my ancestors to right what might have been wronged, to correct what might have been misinterpreted, and to acknowledge our indigenous values, beliefs, history as valid components of a worldview. We, too, can contribute to our own indigenous theoretical framework. We, too, can add to the academic discourses not as American educated scholars but as wise indigenous leaders in both worlds....theirs and ours.

Qualitative research depends on the researcher as the primary data collection, interpreter, and presenter of the findings and conclusions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Embarking on this research project is a humbling experience for me as a budding indigenous researcher practitioner. On one hand, it is liberating for a Chuukese Micronesian entering into that exclusive privileged title of “researcher” once occupied by Western scholars, anthropologists, and academics who

pursued knowledge about the indigenous communities to which I belong for their doctoral dissertation. Yet, I feel a humbling responsibility to privilege the voices of my own people. I choose to enter into the principle of “meaningful engagement” promoted in the Pacific Research Protocols (University of Otago, 2011).

The desire to focus on FSM students stemmed from my own history as a Micronesian educator in a university setting whose role has been to facilitate the success of Pacific Islander students. By placing myself and my experiences as a Micronesian I take responsibility for my improvement as a leader and to the improvement of my community. McNiff (2010) states that “the emphasis on the living ‘I’ shows how you take responsibility for improving and sustaining yourself, and for trying to influence the development of the world you are in” (p.39). In this study, my views and experiences are taken collaboratively with those of my participants.

I have the experience of overcoming numerous challenges while in college. Like many Chuukese who were inadequately educated in public schools throughout Micronesia, pursuing a college education in the United States was a difficult task. However, like many Micronesians before, I adapted to the challenges of being a foreigner in a foreign land. The responsibility of investigating our uncommon practices to succeed falls on us, because as Wilson (2008) states,

Indigenous people need to do indigenous research because we have the lifelong learning and relationship that goes into it. You are not just gaining information from people; you are sharing your information. You are analyzing and you are building ideas and relationships as well. Research is not just something that’s out there: it’s something that you are building for yourself and for your community (p. 179).

In that mutual sharing of information between elder researcher and youth participant, we continue to “develop, cultivate, and maintain principled relationships (which) is integral to all ethical practice” (University of Otago, 2011).

In pursuing a positive deviance approach, I have accepted the humbling realization that I am a Micronesian positive deviant. My experiences overcoming academic, social, cultural, financial, and intellectual challenges during my history of education in the US are worth incorporating into this study. I am part of the research focus to find and describe those uncommon practices and strategies leading to success. What contributed to my own success all these years in this American school system? How have I and countless Micronesians defied the odds to succeed?

This dual role of researcher participant afforded me a unique perspective into the study. As the first director of the PISC at UH Hilo I am mindful of serving as an indigenous researcher and transforming the research methodology into the core of the study itself. Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) noted,

When indigenous peoples become researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms (p. 196).

This puts me as the researcher into a place of intellectual privilege and responsibility of not only sharing information about the subject matter, but more importantly the care of the participants and their knowledge.

Data Collection

Overview

The data collection methodology included several phases spanning over a course of two semesters. Data was collected through interviews with successful students (positive deviants). All the interviews lasted 90-minutes and were audio recorded for later transcription and analysis. I made the decision to pay a professional transcription company, Cabbage Tree Solutions (www.cabbagetreesolutions.com) to transcribe all the audio files into Word documents because I valued listening to the audio over again without having to stop every few words to transcribe. To ensure accuracy of the transcriptions and to deepen my appreciation and understanding of the interviews, I listened to each audio again while reading the transcriptions and making necessary edits. For the most part, the transcriptions were done professionally and accurately except for some misspelled Micronesian-specific names and locations. In all cases when the transcription was incorrect, I made the necessary edits. The final version of the transcription was coded and analyzed. In the next section, I detail the components that were crucial to the study.

Participant Invitation

The mechanism for inviting Micronesian student participants was equally important for the data collection phase. According to Hezel (2013) genuine respect in Micronesian societies is determined by age, social status, and other factors. Having previously served as director of the PISC, I was especially mindful of students participating in the study out of cultural respect for elders rather than their own free will or interests. Saying “no” in person to an elder is a difficult endeavor.

To lessen the social and cultural pressure on students to participate in the project, I chose to email all my study invitations. Email provided a less threatening format for students to decline the study without added pressure of a face-to-face interaction. The email was carefully worded ensuring that it was personal yet professional, respectful of the student's positive deviance status and their contribution to the community with their knowledge and experiences. Students who volunteered to participate were asked to provide written consent.

Engaged Research

Relationship is the foundation of activities across cultures and communities in the Pacific (Morrison, Vaoleti, & Vera, 2002). Both researcher and participants become “co-creators” of community knowledge through this gradual process of engagement. Vaoleti (2006) argues that *talanoa* is most appropriate for Pacific Islanders because it involves a “personal encounter...requires researchers to partake deeply in the research experience rather than stand back and analyze.” (p. 24). The importance of relationship in a research encounter to achieve enlightenment is what Wilson (2008) considers a “ceremony” between indigenous peoples as the researcher and the researched.

Building trust becomes an important component of the indigenous research approach. Having established a solid relationship with participants long before we became researcher – participants, I was afforded the ideal environment for this study. To avoid any conflict of interest and power dynamic, I recruited participants after I resigned my leadership role at the PISC.

Interview Process

In my email to participants I always made sure to let them choose a location where they felt most safe to converse. All chose my office as an ideal location to be interviewed. Located on

the 2nd floor off the main hallway of the Kanaka‘ole Hall on the UH Hilo campus, my private office window overlooked a grassy field between the library and several other buildings offering a secure environment for participants.

Interviews

Interviews were scheduled around the students’ availability. All except one interview occurred in the evening when the building was least used and on weekends when it was closed. The timing of the interviews offered the privacy needed to protect their anonymity. All interviews were audio-recorded using three electronic tape recorders placed in different spots; the clearest of the recordings was sent off for transcription. The other recordings were destroyed to safeguard the security of the data.

I used a semi-structured interview protocol for all interviews that included a facilitation script and questions that allowed sufficient guidance for in-depth conversations without being overly scripted. In the Micronesian culture offering food is the greatest form of hospitality and honor given to a visitor. Hezel (2013) recognized that, “food has always held a central place in island culture” (p.50). Keeping with this practice, I always provided meals such as pizza, bentos (box lunch), or sandwiches. Every interview began with a meal to maximize the *talanoa* method of relationship and community. The “talk story” strategy during the meal is equally important in the indigenous research paradigm. Wilson (2008) considers ‘small talk’ in normal conversation as “key to getting everyone into mutually respectful relations” (p.99). For each interview, the meal talk enabled us to complete the IRB-required formalities, gather waiver signatures, answer questions about the research process, and complete other procedures in a non-threatening

fashion. During the mealtime, I re-iterated the importance of their participation and provided opportunities to opt out of the study at any point.

Observations

In a normal PD setting, observations are crucial to the data collection method. According to Pascale, Sternin & Sternin (2010), the PD research method involves “conducting in-depth interviews and observations by the community and PD facilitator(s)” (p. 204) because interviews and on-site observations together provide the best opportunity for the researcher to understand the behaviors that contribute to the success of the positive deviants. In this study, I chose to omit observations of the participants, because it would require a trained team to adequately and methodically conduct the observations. Normally, the community would have agreed to solve the issue and they would have set up a schedule of observations of the positive deviants once they identified them. In a university setting, it would entail a longer period of research with trained teams comprising the student, faculty, and staff.

Data Analysis

I used a professional data analysis software, MAXQDA12 - Qualitative Data Analysis Software (www.maxqda.com/) to analyze the interview transcripts. The program provided an efficient way to catalog the categories common words, phrases, ideas to which I could make some informed interpretations for the study. The final edited version of the Word document transcriptions were uploaded into the software. No personally identifiable information was used in this process.

Next, I identified categories representative of the most identified topics in the responses to the interview questions. Under each major heading (Life Experiences, Pre-College Influences,

College Experiences, Recommendations), I created sub-topics to support each of the major topics. My choice of investing in MaxQDA12 enabled me to have a complex categorizing system of the 730 codes generated from the data. In the table below, I show the complex categories and the general number of times the respondents discussed an existing sub-topic or a new one.

Table 4. General Codes & Categories

I	Life Experiences	25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No money to pay tuition • Failures • Environment • Gang environment • Family taking care of each other • Tragedy • Discrimination 	
II.	Pre-College Influences	250
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict schedule • Military • Culture • School environment • Peer influence • Religious influence 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff • Self-efficacy • Family influence • Sports influence • Plan early in high school • After School programs 	
III.	College Experiences	442
A.	Barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College unpreparedness • Cultural inhibitions • Resourcelessness • Community-less 	
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Credibility

The design of this qualitative study is such that credibility is paramount to the quantitative criteria of validity. Traditional quantitative research methodology requires safeguards against the concerns of validity and reliability, but such are based on the assumption of replicability and repeatability of the results. I ascribed to the emerging postmodern qualitative research argument for ensuring “authenticity and trustworthiness of the study” (Merriam, 2009) over its validity. One such proponent of alternative validity methods was the Web Center for Social Research Methods (Trochim, 2006):

...qualitative researchers do have a point about the irrelevance of traditional quantitative criteria. How could we judge the external validity of a qualitative study that does not use formalized sampling methods? And, how can we judge the reliability of qualitative data

when there is no mechanism for estimating the true score? No one has adequately explained how the operational procedures used to assess validity and reliability in quantitative research can be translated into legitimate corresponding operations for qualitative research pages (Trochim, M. (2006). Reliability & validity. Retrieved from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/relandval.php>)

As an indigenous Micronesian researcher, the viewpoints of the positive deviants carried their own credibility, but I built in triangulation to ensure credibility for the research methodology. In Micronesian cultures, by my holding the position and title of being the former director of the Center, I was considered an elder in the Micronesian community, which could potentially influence participants' views - saying what they think I want to hear.

Being a Micronesian positive deviant potentially biases my own views and interpretations leading to unintended censorship. To safeguard against researcher bias (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam, 2009), I kept a journal about my feelings and thoughts on certain topics of importance to me. After each interview, I spent at least another 30 minutes jotting down notes about the participant, my questions that needed further investigation, and any feelings. Being upfront and honest about these topics or feelings kept me aware of my own biases while at the same time mindful of areas of agreement with the students.

I also utilized the member check process (Merriam, 2009) to ensure accuracy from participants. During the interview process we agreed to the terms of the member check. We agreed that after combining the set of recommendations from the participants I would send them to each participant for the ability to change thoughts expressed in the interview. This collective wisdom enabled each member to add or challenge any of the set of recommendations.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Introduction

As indicated previously, the goal of the study was to utilize the positive deviance approach to identify strategies and practices of highly successful Micronesian students (positive deviants) at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. Originally, the study focused on the following research questions:

1) What strategies and practices do highly successful indigenous adult Micronesian students employ to succeed in higher education in Hawai‘i?

2) What can institutions of higher education in Hawai‘i learn from a strength-based, positive deviance approach that informs student support services programs to facilitate the success of indigenous college students?

Through the literature review, it became necessary to explore the challenges facing even the most successful Micronesian college students to fully appreciate the strategies they employ to achieve success. As a result, a third research question was generated: What barriers have positive deviants overcome to persist in college?

Through the positive deviance framework I will identify specific practices that will inform a set of recommendations for institutions of higher learning. These recommendations will be grounded in an asset-based approach to student support services for Micronesian students studying in the US. To that end, data was collected from interviews with twelve currently enrolled and newly graduated students from UH Hilo. While maintaining anonymity of my participants, I opted to identify them respectively by the island state to which they self-identified (Chuukese, Kosraean, Pohnpeian, and Yapese) to remind readers and practitioners of the

uniqueness of these states in the FSM. In this chapter I will first discuss commonly experienced challenges faced by positive deviants followed by the practices and behaviors leading to success.

Barriers to Success

My conversations with study participants highlighted enormous challenges they had to overcome to succeed in higher education. These barriers included general unpreparedness for the college experience, cultural values, and lack of resources, community support, and self-confidence in their abilities to succeed. The following describes the challenges experienced by positive deviants. Pseudonyms are used to hide the identity of study participants while exemplifying their authenticity of individual voice.

Unprepared for College Life

Newly enrolled students at institutions of higher education often start at different levels and degrees of preparedness. Although several study participants previously attended local community colleges, transferring to a four-year university proved difficult. This study revealed a common theme among participants of being unprepared for the rigor and expectations of a four-year institution.

Academics: Preparedness for the academic rigor of college was another barrier to success for the Micronesian positive deviants. Some shared that they lacked some foundational knowledge and concepts from their secondary education experiences in Micronesia. A Yapese participant who graduated from a private school in Micronesia related his first semester university experience:

So, pre-Calculus, there were concepts that were missing. So, I remember my first semester I dropped out of my pre-Calc class 'cause I was just— It was just everything

that I was supposed to know by that point, it wasn't there. I was like "Oh, this is not right for me." So, I withdrew from that class. Chemistry too, I was very fearful to take any science class in this school. And I think so far I've managed to not take any really 'cause chemistry like— In high school, the teacher would come late. The teacher would come in maybe 20 minutes late and we're just fooling around and it's like "Hey, you guys, draw one picture for me. I give you credit. I'm busy." So then he would go out the door. So, I will draw my little house with the tree and then that's how I passed chemistry. Or sometimes he will come in like, "I have a story for you guys." He will tell his story. "You wanna hear another story?" Okay. So, he tells another story. You know, some other classes too are like that.

Language: Most participants agreed that the lack of academic preparedness underscored their perceived inadequacy to speak proficient English. They also experienced some level of culture shock to the extent to which high levels of English is spoken in and outside of class. This lack of confidence in English language proficiency exacerbated difficulties during their first year in college.

Some participants blamed their high school education for ill-preparing them for the language proficiency expectations. A Kosraean student felt that while his public high school encouraged teachers and students to practice conversing in English, teachers did not consistently enforce school policies and continued to teach in the vernacular.

Before coming to college, they say, "You know, you have to practice in English," because we didn't really speak English. Even in high school, they say the principal will require the teachers, but there are some teachers that still speak in Kosraean. But when I

first got here, like of course culture shock and then like one major thing was language. Like it was hard conversing with other students. It was hard communicating with teachers. And like class discussion, you're like always—I was always one of the quietest students during class time.

Lack of Caring Teachers: Interestingly, several participants shared this sentiment about the lack of caring high school teachers in their academic preparedness for college. One of the Chuukese students described his frustration about teachers in Chuuk,

Some teachers in high school are just there to give out the lessons and then that's it. It's like they are not devoted to their job. That does not, I mean it's not only affecting how the students learn, but it affects everything for the students. It discourages them to work harder and try their best in school, you know. It's just like looking up at someone older than you and then you see the examples that that person is setting for you isn't good. Teachers serve as role models often influencing behaviors and attitudes. As described in the quote above, teacher quality plays a large role in a students' academic preparedness for higher education and beyond.

Time is Communal: All participants consistently related time management as an impediment to their success. To some, their ability to manage their responsibilities and meet deadlines were skills they should have learned during their high school years. Yet some participants viewed time management as a difficult culture-bound behavior to adopt. A participant shared that back home in Micronesia, time belongs to the community rather than to the individual. He said, “You have no personal time, just communal responsibilities to accomplish. Now in college we need to take responsibility for our own success. And that

depends on how you manage your own time.” Another participant pointed to what he learned about time management during his first semester in college.

Time management was a problem. When I think about time management, I think about the routine that some Kosraean students usually do— like coming back to their apartments – after their classes and don’t do their assignments on campus or go see their professors because now they’re too far from campus. I started doing that too my first year thinking that’s how college works. But then it was not working for me. It’s like I was too far from everything like the library, offices, computer labs, so I didn’t do work ‘cause when I’m home I’m in my bed or on the couch to just rest, then there goes the night. I ended up sleeping then the next day I was like “Oh, I forgot to do this and I should have done this.”

Another participant talked about the disconnect between high school and college and the cues used to facilitate proper time management. “I was not ready to manage time in college because in high school we had a bell that would dismiss you. Here in college it’s really different and you have to make time to study. I had to really like manage my time like ‘Okay, I think I need to study now.’

Family Obligations: Central to the Micronesian culture is an extensive social system of support ranging from the immediate family to the clan system, island, regional, and church communities. In most situations back home, the extended family and community provides a solid foundation of support during difficult times. Everyone shares the load so no individual is ever carrying their load alone.

Some participants viewed higher education as an individual endeavor which sometimes clashed with the community-minded Micronesian students. After all, success is defined by individual grades, GPA, and personal efforts. Most participants expressed their obligation to financially support their family as shared by a Kosraean student,

One of my obstacles, well, my parents really told me not to worry about it, but I still feel sorry for them that I live here. So, I had to send money back home, you know, just to help them out. I have struggles too, but there are struggles at home too. I'm not the first born in the family, but I am the first to be in college, at the university level actually. They need me to step up.

Meeting the family's overt expectations can be difficult to manage for students. For this female student who was the youngest daughter, the expectation on her to provide for the family financially while she barely has resources for her own schooling was particularly difficult.

Like I am not even the oldest, but for some reason, they're always talking to me. My older siblings, my older sisters, like when they're going through trouble, they're always just calling me. And I can never like relax when I know that one of my sisters is in need. There was one point I was really, really broke like I had zero balance in my account, but I never asked for my parents to send me money 'cause I know how hard it is back home. Same with my sister — She needed money and so I sent her money and then like she told me she was gonna return it, but then she asked for it again. I sent it.

All of the Micronesian participants in this study discussed their obligations they carried as college students. Most are first generation college students so families depend on them. A Chuukese student shared,

They [parents] didn't get to complete college because of us, me and my siblings. Because of that they struggled raising us. They struggled a lot. I feel like since I am the oldest boy in the family, I have to sort of work hard, get a good career to be able to support them, giving back to them for what they've done for me growing up, supporting me and my family. I feel like it's on me to be able to help, in order for our family to do well or survive. I would have to be the one to work and bring in resources. My dad is getting old and so I'd say this is just on me."

This acceptance of their role as providers even as they are struggling with resources in college was expressed by all participants. They felt a sense of obligation regardless of whether they were raised in Micronesia or in the US.

Respect for Elders: If there is an enduring value that prevails across the Micronesian islands, cultures, and languages it would probably be the importance of respect for elders. Elders are held in high regard. In Micronesian cultures, deference is afforded to teachers, political and church leaders. For all study participants, professors were considered elders much as they would back in their home islands.

Many participants indicated their discomfort when speaking in classes or approaching faculty during office hours out of respect for them as elders. Disengaging from or not directly communicating with elders is one manifestation of how Micronesians demonstrate respect for their elders. Other outward signs of deference to elders include not holding eye contact, which has been misinterpreted by American teachers as disrespectful. These cultural nuances, according to participants, have prevented them from succeeding early on in their college careers.

A Pohnpeian participant related the difficulties mediating this cultural practice of respecting elders through silence while acclimating to the expectations of oral participation in classes.

Like in classes ‘cause we are used to say something when we are told to, so in classes.

Well, we cannot— Like in our culture, like when you’re talking, we have to wait. When you’re done, then we can say. And like for elders, we cannot just like tell them what we think. We respect the elders. So, for us, it’s like a culture shock ‘cause over here in order for you to survive or pass your classes, it’s just like interrupt like say whatever you’re thinking.

The challenges of reconciling Micronesian cultural norms with American academic expectations was shared by all participants as illustrated by this Chuukese participant, “I guess just from growing up, to respect the elders, not to like talk over them or talk back. So I guess I was just used to that not talking over, raising questions against the elders.” This appearance of disinterested students as perceived by faculty, could negatively impact student teaching and learning.

Humility: Another cultural practice that served as a barrier to achievement shared by Micronesian positive deviants was the importance of humility in community settings. Humility is demonstrated through silence and represents one’s respect for elders. To be successful, participants have struggled to balance their indigenous identities and values with the expectations of a Western educational institution. If faculty have no context or understanding of the importance of humility manifested in silence, then it can pose a problem for students. A Yapese participant explained this reality.

At times it can be difficult because not many professors understand our culture. For me, when I first came to college, the stress of class participation, speaking up, it's kind of hard for me because I am not really outspoken to begin with. And then I grew up in a culture that values humility and expects me to know my place in relation to the community.

Moreover, some participants struggled to manage the perceptions of other Micronesians related to cultural values and behaviors. A Chuukese participant described the problem of not conforming to the culture of humility, "Even if I knew things I really didn't want to stand out from the other Micronesian students who were mostly quiet and humble in my classes."

Limited Resources

Limited resources were a major obstacle for participants in this study. The lack of resources can be understood as both an absence of basic means, and perhaps equally important, the critical skills to manage these limited resources within the larger context of American life. Although all participants talked about the need for a steady income, the expenses of housing, and having no consistent transportation for jobs, they seemed more frustrated with their lack of financial literacy and their inability to effectively steward their resources.

Financial Literacy: Most participants discussed the struggle they experienced having little to no financial resources. However, they also expressed a much larger problem with the lack of knowledge to responsibly manage their limited financial resources. Prior to college, most participants had never managed their own bank accounts, lacked the experience and understanding of fiscal acumen and how to live within their means. A participant shared his struggles the first year of college where he had to learn the reality of life in the US,

My first two semesters were really hard 'cause I thought I had enough [money] and I started spending. After 2-3 months, I realize that I will need this much money for the remaining of the month. And also, the first year, summer comes and I have no income. And when I finished let's say my spring scholarship in just the first 2 months, January and February, I had March, April, May and then all throughout the summer no scholarship. June and July. I had to wait 2 months. I had 6 months, but I was able to phone call relatives to support me in that case.

Financial resources are particularly challenging for Micronesian college students because of changes in the economic provisions of their Compact treaty with the US. In the renegotiated treaty known as Compact II, FSM and RMI citizens were disqualified from receiving the Federal Work Study (FWS) component of the Pell Grant which had allowed them to work on campus. While citizens of these two sovereign countries are eligible to work in the US, employment means working off campus. Some participants never worked in a paying job let alone in a US workplace.

Survival Skills: All participants admittedly blamed their lack of basic life skills as contributing to their limited knowledge about survival in an American university. Most notable were not having proficiencies such as budgeting, time management, study habits, and social skills. Most wished they had received training or participated in workshops back in their high schools on what one participant called "US survival skills."

Coming to the US I had no idea how scholarships were awarded. I only know that I will receive the state scholarship. But I didn't know how it will work 'cause I thought like the scholarship will come and everything will be put on to your account for the school. So, I

didn't know at that moment. And like I started off. And then when I found out it will not arrive until the middle of the semester, I panicked. Then I received e-mail like this is what you got. The Pell Grant pays this much and you got a little bit of a refund that you can grab from your Pell Grant and you have the scholarship to pick up also. So, when I got it I thought "Oh, this scholarship is a lot of money." But being a new student and I didn't know how to budget my money wisely at that moment, so I just spent it. That was one US survival skill they should have explained to me in my high school.

The lack of financial literacy skills was shared by nearly all participants. They had to learn through trial and error, often misled by their equally uninformed peers. Having little to no prior concept of the cost of living expenses in the US resulted in unnecessary financial binds. A majority of participants admitted not having any experience handling large amounts of money or at least what they perceived as a lot of money, particularly upon receipt of their scholarship funds.

Relationships

Another obstacle that Micronesian positive deviants overcame derives from the communities in which they have allegiance. Interestingly, it is not only the lack of support, but also the burden of having too much expected support from them by way of communal obligations towards peers, student organizations, faith communities, and family.

Peers: Normally students rely on their peers for support as companions, classmates, study mates, or roommates. While the participants perceived their peers positively, some also considered these relationships negatively. Micronesian students come from cultures that value the collective over the individual. At UH Hilo each of the four FSM states have their own student

organization aimed at unifying them for social, cultural, and educational support structures. All the participants actively participated in their respective clubs to strengthen their cultural identities and support fellow islanders. Yet some participants felt that the expectation to engage in these group activities often put a strain on their time devoted to school work.

Separation from Family: Families, both immediate and extended, have played important roles in the educational success of the participants. All of the participants expressed how their families have been inspirational and supportive throughout their high school education. Some expressed struggling with homesickness throughout their college years especially during the first year. A Kosraean participant related how she missed having her mother near her for support.

There were times I felt like, you know, I wanted my mom. I felt homesick. But before I came here 'cause like 2 years before I came to college, I was actually living with my sister and my brother-in-law's grandfather. We were living under the same roof.

A Yapese participant related the notion of homesickness as similar to missing the people who make up the communal aspect of family. He also alluded to the depth of the relationships enjoyed with their elders, that many of the participants missed.

I don't know about other people, but for me I'm more people sick than homesick. To me, my family is my home more so than the island. I mean, I love the island. But if the island had no people, I wouldn't love it anymore. Right? I just miss my family especially when Yapese elders have this Yapese mentality, which can be very negative in the sense that like my oldest grandma, you know, every time she saw me, she'll just be crying and stuff 'cause she doesn't believe that when I leave she's gonna see me again.

These deep emotional bonds with their elders is common throughout Micronesia and can be an added strain on students as they experience homesickness.

In the process of the interviews, I learned that most of the positive deviants grew up in households where a family member particularly mothers, were their role models and sources of inspiration. Living great distances from home coupled with expensive airfare and costly long-distance phone calls prevented them from accessing those sources of inspiration on a regular basis. A Yapese participant discussed the relationship he has with her mother.

My mom was a huge influence until now...she's like a best friend and mentor. Also in addition to being a mom too, a single mom, so yeah, I think she realized the importance of education and wanted to push me to go ahead and get a degree regardless of how expensive it is and stuff.

Another participant agreed with the role of family as an inspiration they miss while in college. For this student however, these feelings are used as motivation to persevere in school.

I feel like my inspiration goes back to the hardship my parents went through and the message they've always talked to me about. It inspires me to finish school and continue with my masters and stuff. I guess just knowing that even though my parents didn't have that chance to finish like I know I can. You know, we live in a day and age where— You know, at one point, women couldn't go to school or some Pacific Islanders don't get to graduate from college for whatever reason that may be. So, I'm just using that as inspiration for myself, you know. Telling myself that as motivation that I can do it.

Lack of Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is an important component of an individual's success in college. Yet many Micronesian positive deviants struggled with self-confidence. Some attributed it to their cultural norms of humility, respect, and social caste systems where outward manifestations of self-confidence could be easily misinterpreted by their peers. For example, asking questions, maintaining eye contact, public speaking and voice projection, are considered cultural breaches and often frowned upon. Generally speaking, participants expressed an understanding of self-confidence in their educational success, but cultural expectations to fit into the collective made it difficult to fully embrace self-confidence.

I had low self-confidence in middle school from bullying alongside cultural disadvantages such as the caste system. And then my grandmother and mother took note of that and kind of lectured me in a self-confidence boosting kind of way that by high school, I was determined to succeed. So my self-confidence in high school was quite motivated in sense by the want and need to succeed and prove some peers wrong. When I graduated, I realized that self-confidence was motivated by wrong intentions, so I kind of talked it over with my mother and she told me I had to be confident in my own abilities and improve on my faults to make them better. In other words, less about others and more about me, I should focus on myself and less on my peers.

Another participant also struggled with low self-confidence at the onset of his college career. However, receiving a very prestigious and generous scholarship boosted his self-confidence because others believed in his abilities to succeed.

My self-confidence has definitely increased since my high school years. I had no idea where I wanted to go after high school. I didn't know if I had the chance to get accepted into a university and get through an entire college career within four years for a Bachelor's degree. After I got the [removed] scholarship, my self-confidence increased by a lot because with the help of this tremendous scholarship program, I knew they would be able to get me to where I want to be in life through the use of their resources.

Uncommon Practices & Behaviors of Positive Deviants

The positive deviant Micronesian college students in this study were selected because they have implemented successful strategies and behaviors throughout their collegiate education. They have overcome common barriers discussed in the previous section by becoming prepared, capitalizing on their cultural strengths, using resources responsibly, managing communal support, and developing efficacious skills.

College Preparedness

Success Socially Grounded: The positive deviants all arrived at college with some definition of success as defined by their role models in their families and high schools. I asked them to define success and discuss how their definition had changed over the course of their college careers. Their definitions varied but all of them shared a common theme of communal good. Success for most positive deviants was not measured by individual accomplishments and awards, but rather, their aspirations to make a better life for someone else, especially their families.

While maintaining their focus on the good of the family, positive deviants have had to make counter-cultural attitudinal shifts towards a self-oriented re-definition of success. The

pursuit of academic achievement and ultimately graduation took precedence over communal obligations. This manifested in a number of ways for participants including the need to distance themselves from familial and, communal groups to which they belonged.

Showing Up: All the Micronesian positive deviants attributed their college academic success to “simply showing up to classes,” as a Chuukese student simplified for me. After all, the American college experience values class participation of which being physically present in the classrooms is often required. It seems an obvious behavior for college success, but in the context of consistent teacher absenteeism in FSM elementary and high schools, these successful students have had to learn this “strategy” on their own. A newly graduated Chuukese student claimed perfect attendance although he admitted having family issues and obligations throughout his college career that could have easily prevented his class attendance.

I had a system in place which was to show up to every single class. I never did miss one single class in college. Always showing up was key. If some professors offer review sessions, I always show up for those. I guess it was the same as high school. I did all my work, all my reading and assignments. Just finishing them on time.

Making a commitment to attend classes is no small feat for some Micronesian positive deviants. Three participants who transferred to UH Hilo with an Associate’s degree from a community college blamed the lackadaisical academic culture of their previous schools for ill preparing them for the rigor of a university setting. They shared the mistaken belief common on their campuses that class attendance was optional in American colleges and universities. One participant remarked, “I was told that once you go college you don’t have to go to class as long

as you pass your tests. Of course, I can't pass without getting to classes, so just showing up was important for my success."

Cultural Strengths

Positive deviants found ways to navigate cultural expectations around time, self-advocacy, respect, and being role models.

Personalize Time, Manage Expectations: Dealing with the challenge of managing their community obligations within the institutional culture of individualized success has been difficult even for Micronesian positive deviants. While they all identified this challenge of time management, most acknowledged the more important value of managing their expectations of communal activities that inevitably hinder academic success. It is not so much that the positive deviants are time illiterate, but that they find it difficult to sacrifice personal time with the demands of their community obligations. Rarely did the participants allude to wasting time alone. Instead they talked about having the courage to say "No" to their relatives, friends, clubs, churches, and other activities.

Self-advocacy as Communal: Participants had various expressions of self-advocacy that helped them achieve a level of success in college. For a Yapese student, the focus was on having balance in his life to be successful.

I feel like if you don't get a healthy amount of recreation, extracurricular activities, you're just draining yourself and you're making yourself miserable, you know. If I wasn't joining UHSA [University of Hawai'i at Hilo Student Association], I wasn't doing ISA [International Student Association] or whatever it is, you know, some people go to the gym. It's really good, you know. So, like people just need to switch up their

semesters to just keep it interesting to continue going on, you know. Go to the concerts.

Spend a little money to do other things, you know, other than just drinking I think would be good for everyone.

The theme of self-advocacy was expressed by other participants through time allocated for themselves, saying, “no” to friends and family members in order to pursue their studies.

Respectfulness for Success: Some positive deviants utilized their Micronesian value of respect to their advantage, in and out of the classroom. For a Chuukese student, being respectful paid dividends for him. He attributed his respectful attitude to having a community of non-Micronesian friends who offered to help with tutoring, proofreading his papers, and other guidance.

For me personally I would say being respectful and humble are what helped me. That's what also helped me in my own opinion, cause like being respectful and humble, it makes the people around me to feel comfortable coming and talking to me about whatever. Then they also help me in my studies and even my work. I even get support from them academically, like you know my studies and even helping me with my papers, tutoring in English and stuff like that. I think my Chuukese value of respect pretty much help me.

Role Modeling: A common theme among Micronesian positive deviants in their success was to serve as a role model for others. Having others look up to them motivated positive deviants to be successful for the sake of those who idolized them. A Kosraean alumnus expressed the positive feelings he had when a newly arrived cousin (university student) decided to follow his example by prioritizing school work over the regular communal sports activities at the park.

What I did was I told a cousin who is still in college and I told the same thing to him.

And so like, I notice that there was a time that he didn't go to the park as he told me that

“Oh, I'm putting school first.” I was actually proud of him.

Another student agreed with the idea serving as a role model for others said,

I wanna be the person that can try my best to help with the students to try to see if I can kind of somehow change the fact that the students can do it and they can work hard and hopefully bring up the— even if it's little by little. Maybe 20 years from now it can get up there, but that was one reason. And the other one reason is also like what you mentioned. Like you know, you can be a role model. And I see myself like I want students to know— And it reminded me of that one workshop that we did with the students that I did with [name deleted] and [name deleted] and all those others about like if I can do it, so can you.

Resourcefulness

Un-shaming Resource-seeking: Micronesian positive deviants learned to manage their attitude about available resources for student success. Most arrived in the US from cultures where reciprocity was an important component of interaction; where resources were shared between extended family, villages, islands, churches, clans, and other levels of community. Some participants expressed the stigma associated with people who selfishly use communal resources for personal gain. Others felt pressured not to stand out too much from the community. A Yapese female said that she had “to be part of the community struggles” as if overcoming them by herself was “bad or shameful for the others.”

The Micronesian positive deviants seemed to have overcome the burden of shame in college to succeed. All actively sought out free resources and asked for help when needed, including accessing the Pacific Islander Student Center for computer use, Student Support Service Program (SSSP), and the Financial Aid office. Two participants in the study who have since graduated from UH Hilo reflected on taking advantage of university resources to aid their success. The Yapese student wrote,

Reflecting back, I'd say that the initiative I took to utilize the university resources at my disposal aided tremendously in helping me succeed as an undergrad. I will stress though that I had to actively look on my own for these things and put in the effort to make use of the tools provided. It is better that way too because it forced me out of a cultural excuse of minding my own business and not asking for help. So actively advocating for myself and humbly asking for help in the right direction paid off really well.

A Chuukese student indicated in an email,

Reflecting on my decision to utilize the mentioned resources helped me out tremendously during my 2 years at the UH Hilo. I was able to gain the following: focused on my studies, networked with diverse group of students and UH Hilo staff, [gained] work experience (bonus to my resume), self-knowledge & work professionalism, establishment of my identity as a Chuukese, [earned] both soft skills and interpersonal skills. By the time I graduated, I realized that I had undergone a lot of positive changes and personal growth.

Library: When asked which university resource they utilized the most, all identified the library. When asked why the library was their channel for success, their answers provided some

possible understanding of the struggles of Micronesian students in college. According to the participants, the library inspired individualized academic pursuit by merely being around people who were quietly focusing on their success. It provided the positive deviants a safe environment to exercise individualistic behaviors necessary for success in an individualistic learning environment.

Yet, some participants created a community of individual Micronesian learners by organizing library study groups to retain their own need for community. Two participants who participated in a Pacific Islander Summer Bridge program have actively participated in group study sessions at the library or computer labs. These were not necessarily discussion groups, but simply quiet study gatherings, tied together by their friendship through the Summer Bridge program, fueled by the desire to succeed. One Kosraean student shared that “it was really helpful like we would all come together and go to the labs together and do homework.”

For most participants, the library provided a safe, quiet, stigma-free environment from their otherwise communal-focused, social, hospitable apartments. In their home, as part of their cultural practices, they were expected to host visitors, some of whom may be older relatives, which can detract from their studies. Hosting visitors entails showing hospitality by one’s presence because presence is the ultimate sign of true hospitality. In apartments, it would be considered rude for students to shut themselves into a room to study while guests are visiting. According to a Chuukese student,

Our apartment is like an uut [canoe house] for everyone to meet. Most of the time it’s really hard to study there so I don’t even go home until the library is closed. But

sometimes I can't get away 'cause I feel bad about disrespecting people who visit. You know like back home you show hospitality to people when they visit you in your house.

Financial Resources: The participants expressed no shame in seeking out and applying for various financial assistance from the university and their respective national and state scholarships. With Compact funding decreasing and in some instances discontinued completely, this leaves the already money strapped students with the need to supplement their income. Most felt bad about asking for money from their struggling families back in their home islands. All of them supplemented their limited scholarships with jobs on or off-campus while maintaining their academic success. A Pohnpeian student indicated,

Whenever I need help with my assignments I tried to make use of the school programs or resources to keep me going... I utilize any financial resources I can grab on to help with my bills and needs. I come from a big family and money isn't enough to cover my tuition. I tried to maintain my grades that way I can still be eligible for financial aid. The PISC and HELP programs also helped with my studies. They provide access to school supplies such as computers, laptops, and also great experiences [such as] research and internships.

Community Support

Less Community is More Success: The positive deviants all developed a mature and balanced approach to being culturally respectful of their respective communities yet courageous in their individual drive for academic success. Some participants sought creative ways to avoid communal activities and focused on their school work. Most of the participants had to be courageous and lessen their reliance on the community to create successful behaviors. A Yapese shared the challenge of being a successful Micronesian college student:

I feel like the only thing that hinders me as a Micronesian at UH Hilo sometimes is that there's so many other Micronesians pressuring me to do things and stuff. You know, so I look at other successful students like [name omitted] and I noticed that he's one of the most isolated people from the Micronesian community or Yapese community in particular because of how alcoholic they are. So, when he first came here, he was very much around them and stuff. He slowly started distancing himself and I feel like, you know, he had to make that decision for himself to do good in this school and I look at that and I try to also do that. I try to distance myself as much as I can from whatever community or group of people that I need to in order to do good, but yeah. I think the culture can be learned to adapt to this place. Some people never do adapt. You know, like they will just continue going about being super quiet or isolated from the academics and school stuff.

Staying on Campus: Several participants expressed the need for study-friendly places away from the social pressures to do everything. A Kosraean participant shared that he realized after a year into his collegiate experience that he had been blindly following the practices of fellow Kosraean students who welcomed him into their homes. Their practices revolved around going to campus for classes and coming right back to their apartment located off-campus. A year into his collegiate education, the student realized that in order to succeed in his goal of graduating from college, he needed to stay on campus and return home only in the late evenings.

For one of the participants, staying on campus literally meant living in the university residence halls. For him, staying in the dorms was a strategic way to isolate himself from the cultural pressures to be engaged in the community.

I feel like I need to isolate myself from my Micronesian friends. I appreciate being at the dorm like that because while it's cheaper to live at ASH [Adult Student Housing], I appreciate the isolation that the dorm gives me, you know, 'cause not every Micronesian is comfortable to go over there [to the dorms] and I feel like that helps me. If I could, I would live— If I had a car I would live even farther, you know.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to succeed. It is particularly important to understand the mindset of the Micronesian positive deviants. On the one hand, they expressed their struggles with humility as occurring during their first year of school which negatively impacted their success. On the other hand, these positive deviants have managed to overcome their lack of confidence to persist in their college educational attainment.

Self-confidence: Participants reported an increase in self-confidence during college compared to their high school years. Some said self-confidence helped them achieve self-determination and a drive to improve their place in society. For a Chuukese student who experienced racism in Hawai'i, self-confidence fueled his growth in self-determination to grow to appreciate his own strength.

In my time at UH Hilo, my self-confidence has changed. It has gotten better compared to my high school years. In high school, I felt as if I could not be the top of my class because of who I was and where I was from. Of course I got great grades, but I still felt inferior to the "American" students. I felt as if I was not as intelligent as "them".

The environment itself made me feel inferior. People of Hawai'i say that racism does not exist in Hawai'i, and that every new ethnicity or new group of people to Hawai'i

experienced the same type of "jokes" and "treatment." It's only words they say. Well words are very powerful, and I let such words get to me. For example, grade checks for the Hilo High School Football team. I remember one time, we had to get grade checks for football. I got straight A's! When my peers asked me what I got, I got replies such as: "Hou, you cheating ah?" or "What you do for your teachers?" And when it came to the other football players that were known to be "Intelligent" kinds of "people", our peers would say stuff like: "Oh we already know what you got." I just would usually laugh it off but in reality, I let such words get to my head.

The same student discovered his confidence to succeed after earning his first A's in college. Once he realized his strength and being encouraged by family, he began to raise his own expectations.

When I went to HCC (Hawai'i Community College), I was terrified of failing college. I had to work and study really hard to make sure that I "at least" pass my classes. My dad's situation and my mom's encouragement were the key to my drive. I had to do everything I could possibly do to pass my first semester in college. When grades got released, I was shocked and surprised that I actually got A's in college. My first semester grades added fuel to my drive. I started to think to myself that I was actually capable of getting A's and succeeding in college. After that first semester, instead of aiming for "at least passing grades" I raised my standard to straight A's. I was shooting to be the top of my class. With my mother's words of encouragement, my Dad's situation with Immigration, and the help of my HCC advisors, I started to gain the self-confidence I needed. I began to have the mentality that everything is possible, even if I am just an ordinary Chuukese kid

from Hilo. I finally felt that I was able to in a way compete with the "American" students. When I went to UH Hilo, I continued to have the same mentality and self-confidence. With the help of my new advisors in Political Science, and my advisors [names omitted] at the Pacific Islander Student Center, I was able to navigate and transition smoothly through UH Hilo. The advisors at the Pacific Islander Student Center were important to me because they were the link between me and my professors. They made sure that our "American" professors understood what types of struggles and difficulties that students from the Pacific Island nations like me face and encounter in the American public school system. Knowing that there are successful Micronesian individuals in our communities such as: my cousin [name omitted] a law school graduate, and PISC advisor [name omitted] I was and still am encouraged that I too can succeed. Such successful individuals also add fuel to my drive and self-confidence

Inspiration: Most of the participants gained self-confidence from having others believe in their ability to succeed. Most of the participants credited teachers from high school and college for making the extra effort to help them believe in themselves. To a Kosraean who graduated from a high school in Hawai'i, that belief by others was tested in college when his grades suffered his first year. But a scholarship coordinator gave him a chance to work for it and that made the difference. He worked harder and was able to raise his GPA to avoid losing his all-expense scholarship.

My self-confidence has definitely increased since my high school years. I had no idea where I wanted to go after high school. I didn't know if I had the chance to get accepted into a university and get through an entire college career within four years for a

Bachelor's degree. After I got the [omitted] scholarship, my self-confidence increased by a lot because with the help of this tremendous scholarship program, I knew they would be able to get me to where I want to be in life through the use of their resources. During my first semester at UH Hilo, my GPA dropped down to a 2.3. At this point, I didn't think I'd be able to move on with my college career because this meant I would lose my scholarship since they require a 3.0 GPA after every semester. After the semester I got a 2.3 GPA, my scholarship coordinator told me that I had a chance to bring up my grades. Therefore, the next semester comes, and I increase my cumulative GPA to a 2.7. The scholarship seen how well I've performed academically therefore they gave me another semester to get another chance of continuing this increase in my GPA. Next semester comes and I boost up my cumulative GPA to a 3.1. I was so proud of myself and at that very moment, I believed that if I really set my mind and pushed myself into accomplishing a goal, nothing would I felt from when I brought up my GPA from a 2.3 to a 3.1 is the confidence I still feel in myself till this very day.

Independence: For the Micronesian positive deviants, success comes with repeated experiences of achieving independence. Some of them achieve independence by seeking out workshops in financial and time management. Others engage in peer mentoring programs to learn how to ask for help from their peers, something that is particularly difficult in the beginning for some of the participants. A Chuukese participant summed it up clearly,

My self-confidence to succeed in college has changed for the better over the few years that I have spent here at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo than compared to back in high school. I believe that I am more likely to succeed in college now because I feel like I've

known or learned a lot from being independent, from studying, from seeking help from people or appropriate places and also from experiencing diverse lifestyles and cultures. I feel like back in high school my field of knowledge of people, success, and the world was really narrowed because I knew so little information on a lot of stuff for instance, academic resources, stress management resources or counseling services resources and so forth. I feel like my experiences back then were narrowed due to the lack or limited amount of resources that the school, government even family provides. However, compared to today that I am in Hawai'i attending a university, I've been exposed to many different lifestyles and many different choices of resources that I need help with. All of these resources helped boost up my self- confidence to succeed now I know that if I'm struggling in something I know the place to go to for help or the right person to ask for help.

Another Chuukese student shared the same sentiment of overcoming the dependency on the community and family to believe in his own ability to achieve success.

In general, I would say I've grown, I've lived in several different places, experienced different lifestyles and cultures and so my knowledge has been broadened. Back then I wasn't the type of guy that would seek out help when needed or ask questions or make my own money to buy my needs. I have always been so dependent on other people and my parents especially for what I need but coming to Hawai'i taught me something that success must come from yourself. You have to believe in yourself that you can do it. And when you believe in yourself, make sure you act on it or do whatever means necessary for you to succeed. As a saying goes, "talk the walk and walk the talk."

Role models: Another strategy identified by the participants for achieving self-efficacious success is by surrounding themselves with friends who are role models for success. A Yapese participant describes her process of changing her low self-confidence in her ability to withstand the peer pressures of college,

My self-confidence in my ability to succeed in college has gotten better. When I was in high school, I was somewhat confident that I'd be able to succeed in college - however, I still had some uncertainties. I wasn't sure if I would do good in any of my classes. I was also worried that I would get caught up in the "party scene". However, I feel like as I got to college, my support system had grew - I had a lot of friends who were encouraging and good role models, I had a supervisor who always believed in me, and was there to give me lots of tips and advice, and I had the continuous support from my family.

Summary

This chapter detailed the challenges and strategies utilized by 12 Micronesian positive deviants to achieve success in college. The challenges are not unlike well-documented issues facing first generation and low income students in the US including: 1) lack of college preparedness, 2) inability to manage cultural conflicts, 3) minimal resources, 4) struggles to maintain individual goals over community obligations, and 5) low self-efficacy. The study also revealed strategies utilized by study participants which might seem to be common practices for the average American college student, but may be uncommon for Micronesians. To that point, the positive deviants shared some common traits to their success namely: 1) self-regulating preparation, 2) taking an active role in seeking out resources, 3) managing cultural values, 4) being creative about retaining focus on what matters to their community.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This concluding chapter is meant to briefly review the purpose of the research, summarize the findings, discuss implications, and provide recommendations for practice. The number of Micronesians migrating to the United States particularly Guam, Hawai‘i, and Saipan has been increasing since the Compact was ratified in 1986. This is due largely to the immigration provision enabling Micronesians unlimited entry to gain residency, attend schools, seek health care, and various other reasons that motivate individuals to improve their well-being. Among the growing migrants are college students pursuing baccalaureate and graduate degrees in 4-year institutions in the US. Now, the highest numbers of migrants from the FSM are those attending community college.

Micronesians as a population are typically grouped as a sub-set of the larger AAPI community. Several studies on AAPI college graduation and retention rates (Ching & Agbayani, 2012; Kaneshiro, 2008; Teranishi, 2012) admittedly have little data specifically about Micronesian students. Of this scarce data, within the AAPI community there is a disproportionate rate of low retention and graduation for Pacific Islanders. Without disaggregating the data, it is difficult for institutions to understand the unique challenges of this relatively small but new group of immigrants attending colleges in the US. Among the AAPI community however, there are exceptionally successful Micronesian students enrolling and graduating from institutions of higher education.

Purpose & Context

The purpose of the study was to understand the strategies and behaviors of successful Micronesian college students at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. Using the positive deviance approach, the study explored the following research questions:

- 1) What challenges do Micronesian college students face in college?
- 2) What strategies and practices do highly successful indigenous adult Micronesian students employ to succeed in higher education in Hawai‘i?

To answer these questions, I employed a purposeful sampling method of identifying 12 Micronesian students who have successfully persisted at UH Hilo for at least a full academic year. Most have completed more than one year and two recently graduated and were pursuing graduate degrees. Purposeful sampling provides rich and unique data on this specific Pacific Islander student population. Ultimately, what was learned from this study helped inform an action-oriented question: What can institutions of higher education learn from a strength-based, positive deviance approach that informs student support services programs to better facilitate the success of indigenous college students?

Theoretical Framework Re-envisioned

In chapter 2, I proposed to conduct the study using the Positive Deviance framework. I chose this method because of its proven success as a strength-based human development framework. I especially liked its insistence on research from within the community to solve problems facing the community. The PD method believes that in every community experiencing challenges, there are individuals or groups of individuals who utilize uncommon practices to overcome the same community-based challenges.

While implementing the research methodology set out in chapter 3 and describing the findings in chapter 4, I expanded my conceptual framework overlaying it within an oceanic metaphor. The more than 700 themes that emerged from the interviews were bound by the traditional practice of wayfinding, across a vast ocean. After all, participants were and are part of a larger context of the Micronesian migration story. Their journey to the US is only the start of an even more challenging process of navigating success in a different culture. For Micronesian students, higher education is not an ivory tower to climb, but rather another ocean to navigate with its own challenges, tumultuous waves, unstable currents, sharp corals, and scattered debris. For many Micronesian youth in the US, a college education is a daunting ocean to navigate.

Figure 2. Theoretical Framework Re-envisioned

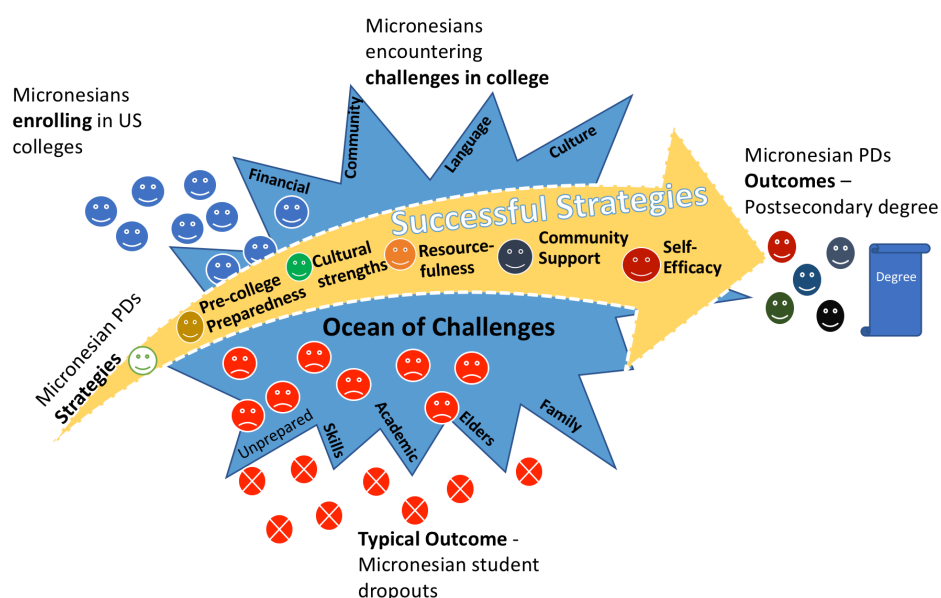


Figure 3 shows the re-envisioned theoretical framework. Of the many Micronesian students who attempt to cross the ocean of challenge known as higher education with its strong waves and currents, many fail and are swept away. Yet a few manage to build bridges or

strengthen their canoes to cross the ocean and reach the other side (graduation). The PD framework focuses on successful individuals who overcome the challenges.

While chapter 4 focused on students, this final chapter addresses higher education personnel. I present implications and recommendations for practice for those who provide services to students in the schools. I conclude with suggestions for additional research to create an even better understanding of the needs of Micronesian college students on post-secondary campuses in the US.

Implications for Practice

The findings suggest several recommendations for student service providers arranged into four areas: 1) pre-college: strengthening of college preparedness at recruitment pipelines, 2) on-campus: creation of culturally-sensitive support structures on college campuses to develop students' sense of belonging and capacities for self-regulatory activities, 3) value-management: support students' management of cultural values, 4) self-efficacy: build self-confidence. I will now explain each of these areas below.

1) Pre-College Preparedness

The notion that college success often begins before students arrive on campus underpins the following recommendations related to pre-college engagement facilitating student preparedness at the high school level.

Strengthen College Preparatory Pipeline: Studies have shown that completing a college education in the US today is a daunting task for first generation American college students. A National Center for Educational Statistics (2005) report on the report cards of first generation college students concluded,

...compared with students whose parents attended college, first-generation students consistently remained at a disadvantage after entering postsecondary education: they completed fewer credits, took fewer academic courses, earned lower grades, needed more remedial assistance, and were more likely to withdraw from or repeat courses they attempted. As a result, the likelihood of attaining a bachelor's degree was lower for first-generation students compared to their peers whose parents attended college.

Pursuing a college education for PI community members is an overwhelming task culturally, psychologically, financially, emotionally. Micronesian students arrive in the US academically unprepared for a college education with some exceptions. Colleges tend to address the need for retention and graduation rates when students are on their college campuses instead of working closely with the feeder pipelines to help prepare students for success.

This study revealed an interesting understanding of what it means to prepare for college. It is worth noting that of the 12 participants only the two graduates of an elite private high school in Micronesia spoke highly of a curriculum and school culture that focused on college preparatory classes from their freshman year to senior year. In that system students progressively advance in their academic competence, decision-making process, and finally their college choices. They are supported all the way through that process culminating with a College Success course to prepare them for college level education. Students in the public schools received little to no help with college counseling.

The responsibility of preparing high school students for college should not be left solely to the high school apparatus in Micronesia. Higher education institutions need to build stronger pipelines among Micronesian high schools and community colleges complete with on-going

relationships and professional development for college counselors as the first contacts with potential students. College recruitment efforts must align with retention services. Anything less is irresponsible.

Develop Culturally-Sensitive Life Skills: Participants discussed the difficulties they faced their first year in college partly because of their lack of life-skills needed to thrive in a foreign culture and on a college campus. Except for those who graduated from high schools in the US, all the participants who traveled from Micronesia to attend UH Hilo wished they had received training prior to setting foot on campus. Most spent an extraordinary amount of time learning basic life skills necessary for survival in the US.

Develop Financial Literacy: Addressing financial challenges for Micronesian students require some understanding and nuances about money itself. Most of the participants were born in the changing cultures in Micronesia; some expressed growing up in families and communities that continue to live off the land and from what is caught in the ocean. To them the value of an income is measured in terms of shared crops and communal fishing activities. Granted, they understand the value of a college education for a better life with a high paying job, they have had to adjust their mindset to the cash economy.

Create a Micro-Budgeting 101 Course: Typical budgeting workshops emphasize management of personal finances steeped in personal decision-making processes. Often budgeting workshops presume Western assumptions that value hard-earned money as belonging to an individual and managed individually. As a result, budgeting is often simplified in terms of one's income and expenses teaching skills related to the accounting mechanics of a person's

“regular” expenses such as food, utilities, transportation, rent, groceries Budgeting is taught in terms of managing two sides of the ledger.

Firstly, micro-budgeting should focus on what it means to be a Micronesian in the US. Students must be given the opportunity to reflect on their biases, knowledge and practices of resource sharing within their respective Micronesian cultures. They need to have a solid understanding of “typical” expenses in their families, clans, villages, island communities and how those expenses are shared. Resources including money are distributed ---no one goes homeless or hungry, the family and community often provides for every member. Students need to understand their typical daily, monthly, and yearly expenses back home and how those expenses are shared within the family, church, community. Have the students discuss these issues in pairs, triads, small groups, and in a large group setting.

It is important for Micronesian students to fully reflect, share, and understand their biases about financial resources. By listening to each other articulate their experiences and expectations of shared resources they can then progress towards learning American personal budgeting skills. The critical term related to budgeting is, “personal” encompassing both negative and positive connotations about how individualistic management of one’s own resources creates dissonance for Micronesians. The dichotomy of self-less socialization and self-advocacy survival often is a source of struggle for Micronesian students. They not only need to learn about typical expenses in the US, but more importantly the atypical and hence, uncommon attitudinal adjustments they must undergo to financially succeed. After all, pursuing a college education is a personal endeavor where grades are usually awarded for individual effort, most papers are written by one’s own “hand”, and graduation is determined by one’s motivation. After graduation, the

career and life ventures are often singular activities where an individual's job qualifications are established through a unique resume, personal efforts lead to career advancement, and rental leases are signed by individuals except for married couples.

Micro-budget training is as much about micro-managing one's personal finances as it is about building one's courage to say "NO" to communal obligations. The more Micronesian students can embrace a level of individualism over communal obligation, the more likely they are able to fiscally survive within their limited financial means. They must be able to comfortably embrace self-advocacy without alienating their cultural values related to communal obligations.

2) Culturally-Sensitive On-Campus Support Structures

Hospitality is an important component of the Micronesian cultures. Recruiting Micronesian students to a college campus must be accompanied by the appropriate support structures on campus to give them a "sense of belonging".

Pro-Personalizing Faculty Access & Advising: College campuses want to increase their student enrollment, yet at the same time, may be becoming less nurturing (Darby & Crosby, 2013) and less personalized. According to these authors,

...college students have been abandoned in terms of authentic nurturing relationships and support. Students are provided plenty of consumer goods and services in college, but fitness centers, computer labs, and late night cafes hardly provide the kind of personal attention and nurturing that students so often need from experienced faculty and staff. In the absences of such adult mentoring and guidance, students have little insulation from the worst influences of the college peer culture.

It is within these changing trends of campus environments that Micronesians are finding themselves struggling to fit in and thrive.

Micronesian positive deviants have somehow defied the odds of bridging the chasm in the elder-youth cultural dynamic. They managed to overcome their cultural inhibitions about interacting with faculty, perceived as elders in positions of influence. Most participants attributed this growth to at least one faculty mentor who personalized the practice of advising. These adults cared more about supporting student's cultural well-being over Western norms of "professionalism" which can be easily misunderstood as elder-authority requiring respect and keeping a distance.

Avoidance is the highest form of respect for a Micronesian to demonstrate towards an elder. Respectfulness can be manifested in avoidance of physical touch, eye contact, verbal engagement, and most definitely anything resembling imposition on one's time. Any number of these cultural avoidance practices steeped in cultural respectfulness showing deference to faculty advisors may be counter-productive for students who need assistance.

It is unfair and perhaps a futile exercise to expect Micronesian students to quickly modify deeply engrained cultural values and practices while excusing faculty members from changing their professional practices for the sake of student success. "Pro-personalism" is my approach to redefine professionalism in academia that radically de-emphasizes the behaviors aimed at communicating competence, knowledge superiority, while focusing on personalizing the experience of human connectivity with the student. It means inviting the already culturally intimidated student into a safe and neutral space in which they connect with the name and person before the title.

A simple recommendation for pro-personalizing engagement with Micronesian students is to do what elders in Micronesia would never do lest they lose their respectability. And that is to make the first move to extend your hand, time, ears, and space to the youth. As early as possible in the semester, personally invite the student to walk with you to your office (hopefully you have office hours after your class). On the slow walk, ask them about their family, what tribes (clans) they belong to, what island they were raised on, who inspired them to be in college, what was the last advice someone gave them before they left for college, who gave that advice, and what that person means to the student. Bring the student to your office to sit a while and continue the conversation. Let them sit and talk with you in your office about things that matter to them.

A simple gesture of personal engagement initiated by the “professional” will break down the culturally imposed barrier between elder and youth. It enables the elder to physically invite the youth to the office, the sacred space of an elder which rarely happens in the cultures of Micronesia. Close the personal time with an invitation to return and talk about anything and ask questions. It is doubly crucial for Pacific Islander staff and faculty to make the extra effort in interacting with Micronesian students to alleviate any self-imposed cultural protocols around elders that might inhibit relationships.

Financing College 101: The positive deviants in this study consistently pointed to financial struggles as the most distressing component of a college education. Academic success seems easier to manage because one can shift, increase, or decrease time, duration, depth of one’s engagement to receive a good grade. Whereas, even positive deviants struggled with financing their education because most come from low-income homes. Most financial resources

available through colleges addressed “low income” students. Many Micronesians such as myself come from families where there is no-income. Students from these family backgrounds cannot rely on financial help from home. They know that household resources are limited and so they ask nothing for themselves. As described in the interviews, these financial challenges create high levels of stress.

Financial aid offices need to address the unique financial challenges of Micronesian students by providing financial packages that meet the students’ needs. Because they are not US citizens, Micronesian students do not qualify for most need and merit based financial assistance available to most American citizens. Since 2005, Micronesian students were no longer eligible to receive the Federal Works Study (FWS) component of the Pell Grant which previously, provided Micronesians funding for on-campus jobs. While they are legally eligible to work off campus per the immigration provisions of the Compact, the lack of transportation and the stress of time spent away from campus becomes prohibitive for many Micronesian students.

Develop an Ethic of Care: The success of Micronesian students attending college also depends on the degree to which they feel supported by faculty and staff. This is not necessarily unique to Micronesian college students, but coming from cultures where hospitality is a central value leaves Micronesian students feeling hypersensitive to the lack of care on college campuses in the US (Dalton and Crosby, 2013). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) identified theories which tied student persistence to students’ abilities to fit within the school environment. What happens if a school environment unintentionally requires students from diverse cultures to change their value systems to fit into its seemingly indifferent structures? If the local environment is perceived by students as inhospitable as was expressed by several participants, then perhaps

institutions of higher education need to re-evaluate, to reconsider their strategies to ensure students feel welcomed.

These institutions of higher learning need to create opportunities for student affairs professionals to discuss the effects of school environments on the wellbeing of students. Programs aimed at supporting first generation, low income, and diverse cultural groups have a responsibility to lead discussions and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff facilitating change in school cultures that fosters student success. Dalton and Crosby (2013) promote a student-college relationship that nurtures and protects undergraduates to prevent students from being treated as second-class citizens on college campuses. In Hawai'i specifically, Micronesian positive deviants expressed their concern about the discrimination that Micronesians generally experience as documented in the media. Without a layer of support forged by faculty and staff, Micronesian students are particularly vulnerable.

Summer Bridge Programs: The experiences of Micronesian students in the US are similar to those of first generation, low income, migrant students (Atherton, 2014; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Morse & Hammer, 1998; Pascarella et al., 2004). As such, it is crucial for Micronesians to begin their first year in college confidently, because it can facilitate further developing their academic self-efficacy. A few Micronesian positive deviants in this study attributed their early success to the impact of participating in a summer bridge program. Participation in the program allowed them to arrive on campus in advance of the first day of school to engage in college-level academic preparation. They toured the campus, participated in life skills workshops, attended seminars hosted by successful students, formed friendships with others, and networked with supportive faculty members.

More importantly, their summer bridge experience helped them reflect on their identities and values as Micronesians. It prepared them to take inventory of their history, journey, and their identities as Micronesians pursuing an American education. In other words, the summer bridge program went beyond simple academic preparatory exercises, but was a way to build foundational self-knowledge and strengthen their cultural backgrounds. It focused on their assets instead of providing information to make up for their deficits.

It is crucial for institutions to enhance existing summer bridge programs or develop culturally appropriate experiences that focus on strengths of students first before addressing academics. Both are equally important for the success of Micronesian college students, but the positive deviants experienced a foundational advantage to bridge the deficits of their high school education with the strength of their character as Micronesians.

3) Value Management

Because Micronesians are generally community-oriented, these recommendations are designed to help professionals understand the pressures on Micronesian students to meet familial and community obligations. They are not provided here to encourage institutions to change the students' community-oriented values, but to help them manage them in an American university setting which defaults to individual success.

De-stigmatize Individualistic Success: There is something to learn from the successful Micronesian students in this study who all utilized the library. Some admitted to using the library as an “escape” from the communal aspect of their home-life where it is culturally appropriate for relatives and friends to visit others unannounced. This is a completely acceptable and customary form of communal support in Micronesia. However, in the context of a college education where

students need quiet time to study, they feel vilified for their absence from these communal engagements. Some participants struggled with a sense of guilt for appearing to abandon their deep-seated core of communal living. If these highly successful students struggle to manage their cultural values in the context of individual success, then educators ought to consider helping them through that process of growth.

Personnel who work in programs and organizations to which Micronesian students belong, should be trained in culturally sustaining ways to support students to negotiate their cultural expectations about students' participation in social and academic activities. Training should be developed for Micronesian student-serving club leaders to provide activities supporting both communal as well as individual academic support needs. Currently, ethnically identified clubs such as the Chuukese Student Association (CSA), the Kosraean Hilo Organization (KHO), Pohnpei Kaselehlia Club, and the Wa'ab Student Organization (WSO) have tended to focus on communal social identity and cultural preservation. Student leaders should be trained to know the inadvertent trappings of pushing a communal agenda without providing safe spaces, conversations, time, celebrations around individualistic success of their members. After all, one successful Micronesian adds one more role model for others. Offices that manage student organizations have an added responsibility to develop culturally responsive training for club leaders to lessen inadvertent public shaming of students who choose not to engage in social or cultural activities of the organization.

Sustaining Grounded-ness in Inspiration: All participants attributed their success to individuals in their families who inspired them to pursue a college education. Most defined success as a general wellbeing rooted in their ability to help their families, clans, islands, and

nations back in Micronesia. That sense of focus on a greater goal of service for others was prominent among all the participants. However, over time, miles away from home, and lack of access to their sources of inspiration compounded with the fast pace and pressures of college life, participants admitted at times losing focus on those inspirational values. Some participants used whatever means available to help them stay focused and grounded, from letter writing to emailing, to accessing Facebook and to making long distance telephone calls.

Institutions need to provide opportunities and space for Micronesian students to reflect on their journeys to college by documenting those individuals who inspired them to initially attend college and pursue higher education. Students could create an artifact such as a digital story, poster, album, website, blog, or whatever will help remind them of the values they are bringing into their college journey.

Build a Culture of Self-Help: The Micronesian positive deviants developed a behavioral adaptation when pursuing resources that support their individual success in college. Most had struggled to ask for help because of the cultural mores of humility, shyness, and deference to persons in authority. Micronesians tend to set aside their own needs out of respect for elders and to safeguard communal wellbeing and peace. That played out for some of the participants who had to overcome their value of humility not by rejecting it, but by re-aligning it with the greater good of the family, island, village, state, nation to which they will return to do good. This shift in their interpretation of self-advocacy for the greater good of the community provided a safe mental place from which to “selfishly” seek out resources. Success in this process involves becoming self-aware of the strategies for helping oneself in the present to fulfill the needs of the community for the future. Institutions can help Micronesian students through this process by

actively changing the focus of resource workshops from “How tos” to “Why dos.” It is one thing to give Micronesian students a list of all the resources available for them on campus; it is another to help them achieve a level of comfort to help themselves. Institutions must focus more on the latter to achieve the former.

Expanding Sense of Community: Micronesian students are products of their communal upbringing; an asset that should be encouraged because, as shared by the positive deviants, they cannot become individualistic back home. Yet this study revealed that some Micronesian participants made countercultural decisions to courageously refute their community obligations to succeed individually. Institutions need to help expand the sense of community for Micronesian students who value it without compromising their individual success. Course-related study groups should be formed to engage students in a community setting while supporting academic success. To further de-stigmatize the shame of seeking help, student organizations to which Micronesian students belong should organize communal study times at the library.

4) Self-Efficacy: Build Confidence in Oneself

Successful voyaging is a team effort with everyone in the canoe actively working to reach the destination, supported by those they left behind in the islands and guided by their successful predecessors. This section is directed at Micronesian college students who seek advice from their successful role models in this study. It is humbly mixed with my recommendations as a first-generation college student from a low-income family who has managed to overcome similar barriers to succeed in my own education. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list of recommendations for students, but rather as topics of on-going discussions and interpretations by my fellow Micronesians.

Claim Independence, But Prioritize Class Attendance: All the successful students in this study prioritized class attendance. Each 24-hour day in college is a jumble of small decisions, links which connect to each other to form a chain of success. In college, the successful Micronesian students learned to use systems (calendars, apps, organizers, Post It notes, etc.) to organize all their activities to avoid missing any of these links; the more missing links the less likelihood of reaching one's goals. And you must do these while managing homesickness, culture shock, long study hours, note-taking skills, noisy apartments or neighbors, tests, papers, deadlines, jobs, social networking, research, group work, making money, paying your bills, fieldtrips, sports, socializing, shopping, cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, getting tutoring, and exercises. In the American college setting, time management is a skill to master. Create your own system of managing your time.

Stay Humble, But Seek Help: Students become the master navigator of their own canoe; no one will seek you out to give you the resources. College is when you must grow up almost instantly with a Can-Do-American attitude. You should peel off the external layers of our island cultures of humility, which can stand in the way of taking initiative. Take advantage of any services and programs that help transition you from your high school years to your college career. Pay the small fee to attend your college's new student orientation program; it's a great investment in your preparation to succeed in higher education. Seek the free services offered by the international student services, tutoring center, peer mentoring through a minority student services, financial assistance through your financial aid office, writing through the writing center on campus.

Micronesians are a quietly proud people. Our pride has its proper place in our culture, but must be checked when you are in college. There are people on college campuses whose jobs are to help you succeed in college. Seek them out and get their help. You cannot afford to let your island pride get in the way of your success. Asking for help with tutoring, financial assistance, internships, mental health counseling, leadership opportunities are all components of college success; take advantage of these opportunities.

Be Communal, but Allocate Time for Self: In our laid back close-knit Micronesian cultures, we value spending time with people in our villages, church groups, clan obligations, family responsibilities, and social group of friends. Our self-worth is often measured by the degree to which we fulfill our communal responsibilities. You may be away from your communities, but in college you simply pick up other groups who demand your involvement. Your faculty, staff, and supervisors take the place of your elders; classmates become your church members. Your personal friends back home are replaced by your virtual “FB friends.” Your roommates become your family. All the various groups demand set time with them. In college, you will need to learn how to strengthen your self-discipline to say, “No, thanks, I need to study!” Master those simple words to turn down demands on your time by others to help yourself. Taking care of yourself is a constitutive element of success in the educational system that demands individually-focused academic success.

Respect Elders by Meeting with Faculty: Pacific Island cultures are rooted in the respect of our elders. The cultural power dynamic prevents youth from interacting directly with the elders as such interaction might be considered disrespectful. In college, your professors expect you to come and see them during their office hours. They want you to succeed in their

classes. In fact, most professors have extra points for students who make time to come and get help during their office hours or ask questions in class. They may seem intimidating, but that may be because of our own cultural upbringing. You need to overcome that quickly...on day one and see your teachers as companions on your expedition. Their role is to provide you with the information you need to succeed when you get to shore (graduation). As the master navigator of your canoe, get your bearings from them regularly. To avoid them completely is disrespectful of their role, expectations, and expertise.

Limitations & Recommendations for Future Research

Small and Focused Sample Size

From the start of this study I realized the limitation of focusing on participants from one institution in Hawai‘i. Even though this study used purposeful sampling of positive deviants, it is by no means generalizable to other Micronesians enrolled in US universities and colleges. It is worth noting that while UH Hilo has a long history of supporting Micronesian students, results from this study clearly demonstrated that more supports are needed. The challenges faced by participants in this study may not be reflective of most other institutions around the State or the continental US. For one, outside of the University of Guam, UH Hilo has the largest enrollment of Micronesians in a four-year institution. As such, the communal issues noted in this study may be based on that large number of students. Conceivably, other institutions with fewer Micronesians may not deal with students struggling with those issues.

Single Method of Data Collection

I deliberately used a qualitative methodology to derive meaning from the participants’ experiences. This study could be more informative had I employed mixed methods and collected

both qualitative and quantitative data that represented Micronesian positive deviants from various types of colleges around the US including private, public, community colleges, and universities. The findings from a larger and diverse sample might tell a broader story and may offer recommendations potentially impactful for Micronesian communities around the US.

Self-Efficacy as a Study Variable

Self-efficacy, advanced by Bandura (1997) and others within the social cognitive world, is a social construct. Stajkovic and Luthans (1997) best describes it as dealing “specifically with the control of human action through people’s beliefs in their capabilities to affect the environment and produce some desired outcomes by their actions” (p. 120). This study did not examine self-efficacy although it became an important component of student success. It is worth noting that Micronesian positive deviants in this study had difficulty articulating the contributing factors to their self-efficacious behaviors. I observed that it was much easier for Micronesian students to talk about their actions, definitions of some ideas, people who inspired them. However, when I asked them to reflect on themselves as positive deviants, how they knew they were successful and believed they could accomplish their goals of graduating from college, they had far more difficulty responding to those types of questions. I suspect humility contributed to part of their inability to articulate their success, but I also think there needs to be a uniquely Pacific approach to appropriately measure self-efficacy for Pacific Islanders in a way that removes the stigma of pride.

We need to understand whether the pursuit of an American college education improves or impairs Micronesian students’ self-efficacy. Are indigenous Micronesian youth exhibiting less or more self-confidence before coming to an American college campus where they are devalued to

second class citizens (Dalton & Crosby, 2013) by being students? It would be important to understand the effects of the campus culture of an American institution fashioned after the Western value of individualistic measures of success on community-oriented Micronesian students. Are Micronesian students coerced into conforming to these self-centric notions of success at the expense of their own cultural values of community good? In other words, is a Micronesian positive deviant in college valued the same as one who is less successful academically yet retains and practices one's cultures and values?

Ultimately, the question should be asked, "Are Micronesian students better off as human beings studying in American college institutions if they are not being shaped to be more Micronesians, just coerced into becoming more pseudo Americans?" Is it worth the sacrifice to leave their islands for a college education only to "fail" academically? Does academic failure lessen their self-efficacy in their cultural knowledge or well-being?

Diasporic and Native Micronesians Differences

This study purposefully included an equal number of Micronesian students who graduated from high schools in Hawai'i and those who graduated from schools in Micronesia. The intention to diversify the sample was to determine possible differentiation of strategies and practices based on high school experiences. In the end, the small sample size prevented generalizability to larger populations but the in-depth knowledge gained may be used to inform other institutions with students who have similar characteristics and backgrounds. A future study might be a mixed method, comparative study with a larger sample size using a comprehensive survey of participants. More interestingly, it would be important to understand the differences between the diasporic Micronesian students and the Native Micronesians in their college

preparedness, value systems regarding individual versus communal success, and their rationale for a college education.

Culturally Sustaining Education

I noticed at the periphery of my research a difference in focus between the diasporic and Native Micronesian students. The former tended to focus on helping their immediate family as the focus of their succeeding in college; the latter were much more expansive in their understanding of their place in helping the community referring to their village, island, state, or nation. None of the diasporic students all of whom were born in the US, articulated a desire to help their nation of the US. I do not know if this difference in definition or focus reflected a sense of belonging for the diasporic students. One wonders too if institutions now should begin to create two ways to appropriately support Micronesian students...one for the diaspora and another for native Micronesians.

There is a Chuukese phrase, “*Aramas chok angang*,” loosely translated, “Togetherness works best.” It refers to the value of collective prosperity over individual good, community over individualism as has been widely documented (Cholymay, 2013; Hezel, 1982, 2013, Ratliffe, 2011). Yet, this study has revealed that one of the uncommon practices (uncommon in the Micronesian context), of Micronesian positive deviants has been the need to isolate oneself from one’s community. The participants had to exercise this counter-cultural strategy to maintain or even jumpstart their success in college. College demands individual success; Micronesian students had to train themselves to be individualistic in many ways.

It leads one to wonder if a college education in the US is inadvertently perpetuating a subtle form of cultural genocide. It might be worth studying the impact of an American college

education on the cultural identity of Micronesians. Are Micronesian youth sacrificing their indigenous values of community and reciprocity by pursuing a college education in an American setting where success is judged individually rather than communally? It may not be the responsibility of institutions to make decisions for Micronesian families whether an American college education best serves their long term needs or it hinders them. Micronesian students who choose to pursue an American college education must be supported in a way that empowers the youth to grow in their identities while learning to be global citizens. Institutions bear the responsibility to their consumers to create an environment which empowers students to succeed in an American system while retaining their humanity. It must be accomplished with respect to the students' cultural values. Students should not have to expect to change who they are or their values to succeed in an American system especially if they intend to return home to serve their people in their island nation, home islands, villages, cultures, churches, tribes, and families.

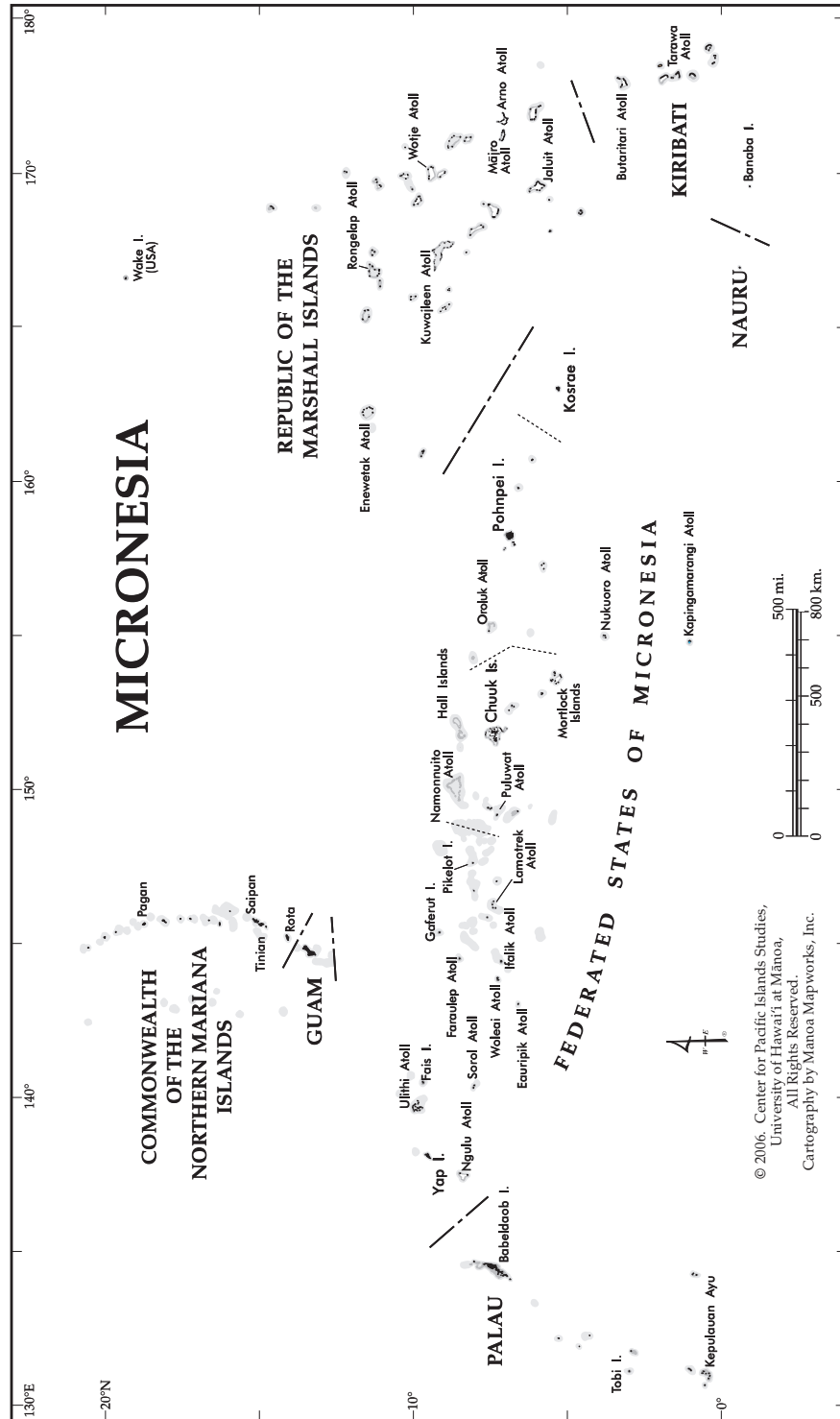
Creating a Micronesian Research Framework

This process of researching Micronesian students, while liberating on so many fronts, revealed a need for the development of a framework specific to the Micronesian region. Much of the guidelines for indigenous theoretical approaches for and by Pacific Islanders have originated out of the Polynesian region. While Polynesian “world views, knowledge systems, lived experience, representations, cultures, and values” (Nabobo-Baba, 2008) may have many commonalities with the Micronesians, researchers cannot assume uniformity throughout that large span of the Pacific. Micronesians deserve our own research framework to better understand and respect the uniqueness of the cultures, languages, protocols within the nation and region.

Conclusion

The growing population of Micronesians in the US pursuing a better life in a postcolonial world has been celebrated and vilified. The limited extant research on Micronesian students has been largely deficit based. This study created an alternative strength-based framework to explore the strategies used by successful Micronesian college students (positive deviants) at UH Hilo. The use of the positive deviance approach is particularly important because it focuses on the experiences of successful students. Through interviews the research showed that success is attainable for Micronesians, but should not be taken for granted by institutions. Even the most successful Micronesian students experienced many of the same challenges facing their peers. In the end, self-efficacy can be developed within the right environment supported by culturally appropriate activities as well as countercultural strategies. The recommendations for practice noted above call for as much change in school environments as in student behaviors. Successful Micronesian college students thrive because they have made cultural and personal adjustments in their behaviors, but they still need caring, compassionate, culturally sustaining campus environments to support their success. In other words, Micronesian students can and do thrive academically on campuses that adapt their culture to ensure the success of students.

APPENDIX A. MAP OF MICRONESIA



APPENDIX B. RECRUITMENT EMAIL

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Project Title: Successful Practices of Micronesian College Students in Hawai‘i: Utilizing Positive Deviants to Develop Student Support Services in Higher Education.

Fairo! Kaselehlhie! Mogethin! Paing Kom! As you may know, I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Part of my program is to conduct a research study entitled, “Successful practices of Micronesian college students in Hawai‘i: Utilizing positive deviants to develop student support services in higher education.” My aim is to examine successful practices of Micronesian (particularly FSM) college students in Hawai‘i to develop a strength-based approach to student support services in higher education rather than the deficit model that is often used by institutions of higher learning. You are invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as a successful Micronesian college student or recent graduate. Your experiences as a successful student can provide valuable information to inform colleges in Hawai‘i and the United States.

A few other information to help your decision, which I will explain further one-on-one for each participant:

Time Commitments:

- Participants will be interviewed individually and/or be part of a focus group with other participants identified as successful students.
- Interviews and focus group sessions will last between 75-90 minutes and will be audio recorded with your permission so that it may be transcribed and analyzed later.
- The discussions will be informal; think of this as a time to share and talk story about your experiences as a successful Micronesian student at UH Hilo.

Benefits and Risks

- While you will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study, your participation is meaningful and will contribute to a better understanding of your experiences as a Micronesian college student.
- There is little to no risk to you in participating in this project. If at any time during the interviews or focus group you feel uncomfortable with any questions, we will skip the question, or take a break, or stop the interview, or you may choose to withdraw from the study all together.

Confidentiality and Privacy:

- During this research project, all data from the interviews and focus groups will be locked in a secured filing cabinet in my office at University of Hawaii at Hilo and on an encrypted computer. Only I will have access to this data, although legal authorized agencies, including the University of Hawai‘i Human Studies Program, have the right to review the research records.

- After the interviews are transcribed, audio recordings will be destroyed. You will be provided a copy of the transcript for review, edit, comment, and/or approval. No names or other personally identifiable information will be used in this research project.

Voluntary Participation:

- Participation in this research study is voluntary. You can choose freely to participate or not. In addition, at any point during this project, you can withdraw without any penalty or loss.

Questions: If you have any questions about this project, please contact me by phone (808) 430 – 2017 or email at raatior@hawaii.edu. You may also contact my advisor Dr. Jeff Moniz at jmoniz@hawaii.edu or my committee members Dr. Mary Hattori at maryh@hawaii.edu and Dr. Denise Uehara at duehara@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, in this project, you can contact the University of Hawai‘i, Human Studies Program, by phone at (808) 956-5007 or by email at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

Please respond to this email if you would like to participate and I will discuss the next steps. Thank you so much.

Vidalino Raatior

Doctoral Student, University of Hawaii at Manoa

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Before the interview...

1. **VALUE-ADDED:** Use Micronesian culturally-sensitive approach to hospitality (Be welcoming, grateful, affirming, calming, humble, lots of warmth & kindness) to build self-confidence in the interviewee and trust in the researcher. Although the interview will be conducted by me, Vidalino Raatior, the instructions will use “we” throughout the interview which is an indigenous Micronesian approach to communal activities; everything we do including this research project is a communal effort to make our community better. Hopefully this process will help the participant focus on his/her role as helping the community. Culturally, it is far more easier for a Micronesian to help others than to talk about one’s success.
2. **CONSENT FORMS:** Distribute consent forms and review each item on the form to ensure clarity. Answer any questions. Collect signed bottom portion.
3. **WELCOMING:** Thank you for agreeing to be part of this study. As explained in our recruitment email and the consent form that you have signed, this research study aims to study the experiences of successful Micronesian college students in Hawai‘i. Your role is extremely important because your experience as a successful Micronesian college student will help others from our community in college. Think of this process as just a conversation. You’re truly the expert on your experience. I’m just trying to learn how best to share your expertise to help inform how universities might better support future Micronesian college students. We may ask some probing questions, but we want you to feel free to just take the conversation where you feel comfortable. How does that sound? Do you have any questions?

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION:

“What strategies and practices do highly successful indigenous adult Micronesian students employ to succeed in higher education in Hawai‘i?”

Q1: Pre-College Experience

Pre-Interview Instructions: To help us situate your college experiences within the context of your journey, we’d like to ask you to recall some of your early memories of life back in your home state, island, village, clan, family, etc.

- A. Tell me about yourself...your name, your year in school, major, island, etc.
- B. Tell me about your family.
- C. Describe what life was like growing up on your village / island / state?
- D. Were there activities that you particularly enjoyed doing? If so, what were they?
- E. Were there activities that you were successful in doing growing up? If so, what were they? How did you know that you were “successful”?
- F. Who defined for you what a successful _____ (Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Yapese, Kosraean) person was / is? What’s is your understanding of that definition of success?
- G. How did you arrive at that definition?
- H. What were the signs or indicators that you have done something successfully?

Q2: College Experiences

Pre-Interview Instructions: Now that we have had a chance to talk about the things that mattered to you as a _____ (Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Yapese, Kosraean), we can move our discussion into your college experiences. We want to try to understand the ways that helped you succeed in college. If it helps, think of this process now as though you were sharing some tips to your younger sibling or a relatives who are thinking of going to college. The more realistic and honest you are, the more prepared they will be to succeed in following your footsteps.

- A. Describe the process that you (or your family) went through to make the decision for you to come to college? Are you the first in your family to go to a 4-year institution?
- B. What / who motivated you to go to college? Why UH Hilo?
- C. Describe the expectations of yourself, from family, community when you were preparing to come to college?
- D. What was experience when you arrived to start college? Airport? Housing? Orientation? First week? First month? First semester? First year? Second year? Third year?
- E. What is your definition of a successful college student?
- F. What is your overall approach to success in college?
- G. Were there things that inhibited your success in college? If so, what were they and what strategies did you use to overcome these challenges? (Probe for answers on such likely challenges as financial resources, time management, peer pressure, cultural clashes, homesickness, healthcare, balance, housing, etc)
- H. What university, community, personal resources did you use, if any, to aid your success in college? (Probe for answers)
- I. What (Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Yapese, Kosraean) values, if any, guided you in your successful journey in college?
- J. What's been easy, difficult, challenging about studying in an American institution in Hawai'i?

Q3: Recommendations

Instruction: For the final part of our discussion, we want to give you the opportunity as the expert on your experience as a successful Micronesian college student to provide recommendations to colleges in Hawai‘i for future Micronesian (Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Yapese, Kosraean) college student. Basically, we are trying to answer the question: “What can institutions of higher education in Hawai‘i learn from a strength-based, positive deviance approach that informs student support services programs to facilitate the success of indigenous college students?”

- A. Do you have any recommendation for colleges in Hawai‘i on how to support Micronesian students?
- B. What do you wish you had known before coming to the United States / Hawai‘i for a college education?
- C. What is your ideal environment to support your success as a Micronesian student in college?

APPENDIX D. CONSENT FORM

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Project Title: Successful practices of Micronesian college students in Hawai'i: Utilizing positive deviants to develop student support services in higher education

Alii! Fairo! Iakwe! Kaselehlie! Mogethin! Paing Kom! I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and am conducting a research study to examine successful practices of Micronesian college students in Hawai'i, utilizing the strength-based approaches, strategies, and behaviors of a group of successful students to develop student support services in higher education. You are invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as a positive deviant. Your experiences as a successful Micronesian student can provide valuable information to inform colleges in Hawai'i and the United States.

Activities and Time Commitment: If you agree to participate, you may be interviewed individually and/or asked to be part of a focus group with other participants identified as positive deviants. Interviews and focus group sessions will last between 75-90 minutes and will be audio recorded with your permission so that it may be transcribed and analyzed later. The discussions will be informal; think of this as a time to share and talk story about your experiences as a successful Micronesian student at UH Hilo.

Analysis: I will analyze the transcripts from the interviews and focus groups to find and categorize common themes in words, phrases, ideas to which I can then make some informed interpretations for the study. No personally identifiable information will be used.

Benefits and Risks: While you will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study, your participation is meaningful and will contribute to a better understanding of your experiences as a Micronesian college student. There is little to no risk to you in participating in this project. If at any time during the interviews or focus groups you feel uncomfortable with any questions, we will skip the question, or take a break, or stop the interview, or you may choose to withdraw from the study without penalty or loss.

Confidentiality and Privacy: All data from the interviews and focus groups will be locked in a filing cabinet in my office at UH Hilo and on an encrypted password protected computer for the duration of the study. Only I will have access to this data although legal authorized agencies, including the University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program, have the right to review the research records. Personal information and all recordings will be destroyed at the completion of the study.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this research study is voluntary. You can choose freely to participate or not. In addition, at any point during this project, you can withdraw without any penalty or loss.

Questions: If you have any questions about this project, please contact me by phone or email: Vidalino Raatior (808) 430 – 2017, raatior@hawaii.edu. You may also contact my advisor Dr. Jeff Moniz at jmoniz@hawaii.edu or my committee members Dr. Mary Hattori at maryh@hawaii.edu and Dr. Denise Uehara at duehara@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, in this project, you can contact the University of Hawai‘i, Human Studies Program, by phone at (808) 956-5007 or by email at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

If you agree to participate in this project, please complete the bottom portion of this form and return it to me. Please retain the top portion of this form for your records.

----- Tear here and return below portion to researcher -----

Signature for Consent

I agree to participate in the research project entitled, “Successful practices of Micronesian college students in Hawai‘i: Utilizing positive deviants to develop student support services in higher education.” I understand that I can withdraw from participating in this project at any time by notifying the researcher.

Your Name (Print): _____

Your Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please check the box below to consent to audio recording of individual and focus group interviews. Audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription is completed.

☐ **I allow audio recordings of my individual and focus group interviews.**

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